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New Essays
Literary and Philosophical

New Essays

Literary and Philosophical

BY

JAMES LINDSAY, D.D.

M.A., B.Sc., F.R.S.E., &c.

AUTHOR OF

'STUDIES IN EUROPEAN PHILOSOPHY,' 'THE FUNDAMENTAL
PROBLEMS OF METAPHYSICS,' 'RECENT ADVANCES IN
THEISTIC PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION,' 'ESSAYS,
LITERARY AND PHILOSOPHICAL,' ETC.

William Blackwood and Sons
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PREFACE.

IN a small but well-received volume of 'Essays Literary and Philosophical,' issued a good many years ago, I dealt with such subjects as "The Mind of Dante," "The Philosophy of Faust," "The Philosophy of Tennyson," and "Emerson as a Thinker." The present selection of Essays I have called "New," partly to distinguish it from that earlier series, and partly because they have been composed and revised in quite recent years. Their publication has been delayed by much pressing work of purely philosophical character. For various reasons, I have elected not to present them simply in chronological order: I have preferred, for example, that the second chapter, which is Classical in

theme, should be immediately followed by a Romantic subject, in chapter the third.

The work is offered to those who belong to the by no means inconsiderable body of persons, who take a keen, rational pleasure in such modes of literary treatment.

JAMES LINDSAY.

ANNICK LODGE, IRVINE,

December 1911.

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NEW ESSAYS: LITERARY AND PHILOSOPHICAL.

CHAPTER I.

POETRY AND PHILOSOPHY—INTRODUCTORY.

IF poetry and philosophy differ in aim and method and apparatus, they have yet their points of common standing-ground and their aspects of intimate relation. They both aspire towards the ideal; they both have truth for their quest; and they are both founded on thought. Poetry may proceed through imagination, as the sensibility of the mind, so to speak; and philosophy may proceed from intellect, but none the less true is it that poetry, too, is an activity of the intellect, which seeks to enlarge the horizon of thought. This leaves us far, however, from accepting Coleridge's dictum that the great poet is at the same time a great philosopher, in any sense that would

subsume philosophy under poetry. It merely claims for poetry the presence of thought, as being what Rossetti properly enough said, the fundamental brain-work of poetry. The feud between poetry and philosophy, ancient as Plato, was treated by him in such wise that philosophy was never subordinated to poetry, and his not very exalted conception of the poet's function was, in practice, redeemed through the vision of beauty. True poetry—the poetry of vision and not merely of beautiful verse-making—exists not without philosophy: it *is* philosophy in the concrete. No more does any great—any really high—philosophy exist to which poetry is wanting; for such philosophy cannot dispense with imagination, however far removed from “the accomplishment of verse.” Imagination provides philosophical thinking with those large ideas, tintured with passion, which we need: imagination forms a whole out of the discontinuities and fragmentariness of our life. So far as the poet has a philosophy, it is seen precisely in the dominant mood or attitude which his genius assumes towards life or the world in whole. For such totality forms the standpoint of philosophy. The poet is philosopher by inspiration and instinct, not through ratiocinative process; the philosopher is poet by insight and vital thinking. All imaginative synthesis is a vital relating of things. The synthesis of the poet is swift, complex, instantaneous; that of the philosopher is laborious, intricate, profound, reached

only through rigid analysis, and is lacking in finality. With this philosophic love of abstractions and divisions, poetry can have nothing to do: poetic ideal lives by its hold on immediate reality, and carries in it something which defies analysis, as it so cleaves to immediate unity and life: what poetry, in its sensuous forms, has joined together, it cannot endure to see sundered by alien, changeful, abstract theorisings. Critical tendency and conscious analysis can have too great a place in the poet, just as analysis was too much king in the intellect of a philosopher like Mill. Poetry is creative; it remakes the universe; but there are senses in which philosophy—which also reconstructs the universe—is not merely interpretative, but also creative. It cannot be said, however, that philosophy is, for the most part, poetically conceived. If philosophy be taken as the theory or science of Reality, poetry must be accepted as founded on reality. For the highest poetry is founded on nature and life. Poetry embodies universal truth, in the shape of the reality that endures through histories and destinies. Poetry may not disentangle the idea or the principle from immediate reality, in the manner of philosophy, but it maintains its hold on the idea, for all that, such poetic idea being other than merely intellectual. It is only hazily correct to say, as has sometimes been authoritatively done, that poetry and philosophy seek the same kind of truth, for poetry is more an end in itself, philosophy

presses more to something beyond itself. Poetry is not concerned with logical truth, but with truth as coloured by mood and personality. Poetry is outcome and essence of actual life and thought. It was in one of his many half-truths that Arnold made poetry a criticism of life. A result, doubtless, of the critical being what he had himself most to give. The truth sought by poetry is widely contrastive with scientific truth, and the hidden life and unity it seeks contrast also with the abstract unity sought by philosophy. In the vast process of world-comprehension, it is but the raw material which is furnished to our thought through the senses in perception, wherein apprehension is restricted, according to Kant, to phenomena "given" us from without. Hence the call to the play of the imagination, in its relative freedom from the dictation of sense, and in its capacity for forming ideal syntheses, whereby a widening vitality accrues to our comprehension of the world. 'Twas thus Schiller spoke of Nature being widened without our going beyond it. Thanks to modern psychology, we now know what and how many are the elements involved in the experience of such imaginative activity—elements presentational, ideational, and emotional, making a most difficult and complex study. Much poetry is not at all philosophical, for such full functioning of the mind is found only in those imaginative realisations which

constitute the greatest poetry. Such poetry can still most needfully recreate within us

“that blessed mood,
In which the burthen of the mystery,
In which the heavy and the weary weight
Of all this unintelligible world
Is lightened.”

But this is no mere result of the poet's “eye in a fine frenzy rolling,” but springs out of the deep insights of reason—the vision and faculty Divine. Thus what Spinoza philosophically proved and defined, Goethe poetically perceived and expressed, and the moods are not rare in which we gladly part with the hard mentality of the philosophic theorist for the magic of the music, the glow of the colour, and the depth of the feelings of the poet. Poetry is differentiated from philosophy by the spontaneous character of the products of creative imagination—ideal patterns which it has sought to reduce to tangibility. Poetry is a dynamic synthesis of the idealising forces in man, and peerless as a humanising agency. Disparate as poetic and philosophic activities are seen to be, there is no need to wish the world's impoverishment by their blending or fusion, were such a thing possible. We can surely allow the serene and lofty wisdom, the large and luminous contemplation, of the poet's clairvoyant soul—we can surely allow the fruit of his outlook upon a calm and infinite

world, to stand beside the philosopher's critical and reconstructive products, paving the path that leads to universal synthesis. But there is even an universality, as in Shakespeare, which does not make poetry strictly philosophical. Shakespeare, no doubt, superbly apprehends and knows the universal in human types of life, but he lacks world-view or unitary conception of such life in its largest reach or relations. This lack of distinctive view or construction marks a dearth of philosophical character or quality. He has, of course, plenty of psychological knowledge of the principles that rule the natures of men. In so recent an example as Whitman, the same lack of unitary conception or construction is to be observed. Wordsworth, on the other hand, was clearly conscious of the fundamental nature of the world as like his own. Says he—

“A gracious spirit o'er this earth presides,
And in the heart of man.”

Such is his vision of the totality of things, conformably to the spirit of philosophy, if not its form. He is saved from pantheism only through Nature, as a Divine unity, being for him, in its vast movement, the complex working of God. Because poetry and philosophy are so distinct, it does by no means follow that poetry may not draw impulse or derive suggestion from the highest philosophy, or the finest system of belief or thought. But the distinctive mission of

poetry is to reveal the beauty of truth—a beauty whose light in its reach extends beyond “the light of setting suns.” This is all very different from the assumption of Novalis, who thought the separation of poet and philosopher only apparent and injurious to both: the philosopher was, for him, omniscient, and the real centre. What philosophy has taught as to the world of outward things—namely, that their *esse* is *percipi*, is not less true of the beauty of colour, form, and motion, that exists for poetry—it exists only as it is perceived in the mind of the poet. The psychological origin of beauty is to be sought in perception, not judgment. Poetic beauty is not, however, to be taken as in origin merely intellectual. Hence to the poet, spirit is the great reality; the real is for him the ideal; and he is bound by no outworn insights of the past. The soul of Beauty enshrined in Nature he therefore voices, as is so finely done, for example, in David Gray’s “Luggie,”—

“The South-West aroused,
Blustering in moody kindness, clears the sky
To its blue depths by a full wingèd wind,
Blowing the diapason of red March.”

If the vision of the poet be, as we have said, swift and glorious, philosophy must follow, with interpretative skill, to make the vision more definite, sure, influential, and helpful to mankind. Thus, though it may be that poetry attaches itself, in its interpretation of life, to the idea, it does by no means follow, as

Arnold was pleased, in his Olympian manner, to announce, that philosophy will, for the most part, be replaced by poetry. Poetry will never be able to turn aside from the underlying currents of philosophical thought, nor be able to sustain her task with any worthiness, in independence of some verifiable or reliable knowledge of the universe. Poetry must carry accuracy in its representations, and to truthfulness and sincerity it must add clear and comprehensive insight before it can be called philosophical. It must, as Carlyle said, transmute the sceptical and despairing world into a wise universe of belief and melody and reverence. Nothing can be more absurd than to suppose that the interpretations of life, wrought of past centuries of reflective thought, do not make the life he has to interpret a different thing to the poet. There is a sure progress of poesy as there is of everything else : poetry itself stands for progress, fluidity, movement, life. But its progress is one of perpetual beginnings. The poet's imagination is founded upon belief, and belief must rest on truth—on the worth and reality of experience. Belief is no product of philosophy, but a fruit of life. Nothing is more vain than the attempt of poetry to shut itself off from all connection with, or dependence upon, philosophy and science. Diversities of operation there may be, but the spirit of man is one. The power and the permanence of poetry are really to be found in its hold upon reality. The philosophical poet, having studied reality

as a whole, will be able to understand the parts, and to justify his ways in the view of the universe. His idealism, however transcendental it may be, will be modified, in manner rarely known to the pure thinker, by his vivid sense of nature, and his instinctive sense of the concrete, as for him the only real. As Browning said—"Truth, truth, that's the gold." But the truth which poetry has seen and sung must be organised by the critical and reflective thought which is distinctive of philosophy. What poetry so gives us in the form of images, philosophy presents in the guise of concepts or ideas. But philosophy, whose care is for validity, may find something of interest and profit in the immediacy of poetry. "The owl-winged faculty of calculation," characteristic of the former, lacks the soaring power of poetry in the highest regions of thought. 'Tis the business of philosophy, as critical, to define the boundary between poetry and thought. For there is an undefined region haunted by metaphysical hypothesis, wherein poetry and thought are often blended. Certain it is that the highest is not less accessible to us in the form of poetry—wherein immediacy is restored to philosophy—than in that of philosophy, which, without taking up into itself something of poetic power or gift, remains a one-sided form of activity. The greatest of philosophical poets is Dante, who essayed, with mighty skill and success, to incorporate in his epic of humanity the most definite of philosophical systems—that of

Aquinas. His world-view carries in it the vision of an universal spiritual order, and of the universal aspects or bearings of life: his poetry makes articulate his inner contemplation of the world in its unity. To illustrate his method more concretely: in the 24th canto of the "Paradiso" Dante draws directly from Aristotle, that "almost divine intellect," as he calls him in the "Convito"—

"I in one God believe;
One sole eternal Godhead, of whose love
All heaven is moved, Himself unmoved the while."

So, in canto 27, Beatrice says in Aristotelian fashion—

"Here is the goal, whence motion on his race
Starts: motionless the centre, and the rest
All moved around."

The poet alone, in his golden speech, gives expression to certain rare and subtle thoughts that find oftentimes a place in the inner sanctuary of the soul. Strength and beauty are within that sanctuary; the strength is fruit of philosophy, the beauty is poetry's flower. To those thoughts, of which I have just spoken, the poet gives at times a soft and chastened expression; for them, at other times, finds only hushed suggestion; and, in yet other instances, strikes out in some dramatic form, as in Buchanan's strange 'Book of Orm.' It was such quality of utterance that gave the Hon. Roden Noel the title to rank

as a modern philosophical poet, which some have claimed for him, although without any pretensions as a systematic thinker. But, in whatsoever form of expression, the inner eye of poetry is fixed on the ideal, which she seeks to imprison, that therewith she may interpenetrate, inspire, and spiritualise the actual. But this makes demand on spiritual intelligence, for it is only to responsive intelligence that poetry will carry significance. Poetry is the universal expression of all that gives essential meaning, joy, and impulse to human life. But, after all her intuitions of truth, she may leave us with a feeling of moral problems still unsolved, saying, as in "Ferishtah's Fancies" (Epilogue)—

"Only, at heart's utmost joy and triumph, terror
Sudden turns the blood to ice : a chill wind disencharms
All the late enchantment ! What if all be error ?"

Hence the beauty, joy, and goodness of poetry do not absolve philosophy from search into the deepest truth, in the cold, grey light of reason. The mission of poetry grows always more impressive, and her task always more complex, difficult, immense, for she must in spirit absorb the teachings of the later science, the newer spiritualism and metaphysics, suffusing them with her own emotional glow. She must, so doing, speak not only to heart and intellect, but inspire the soul and rouse our sluggish wills to finely disciplined action. In all this, philosophy will be her powerful

ally, and send her subsidies of plenary strength and inspiration. But, for this end, the newer philosophy, too, will have its task and difficulties to meet. The real things—*τὰ ὄντα*—of the metaphysician must mean, for philosophy, no “unearthly ballet of bloodless categories,” but things suffused with the philosopher’s own vital human interest, yea, with the fire and passion of his quest for Truth, in the realm of vivified abstractions. Now, philosophy has been all compact of mere dialectics—arguments on the level of the discursive understanding, and rarely lit up by any vision born of the insights of reason. The pure thinker—an Aristotle or a Hegel—is of priceless value, but he is just the being whose discourse is most relieved by great insights. Static systems must count for less, principles, impulses, tendencies must count for more, in the search for intellectual satisfaction: our knowledge and our thought, we may not forget, are themselves part of the world of being, and are themselves still in the state of becoming.

CHAPTER II.

THE CONTRIBUTION OF GREEK LITERATURE TO THE
WORLD'S RELIGIOUS THOUGHT.

THE literature of Greece has never lacked in originality, variety, and charm, all its own. The religion of Greece was the dawn of a new era in the world's religious development. An external cast the popular Greek religion wore, with plenty absurd legends of the gods, who were many. The Orphic songs or legends, standing between Epic and Attic literature, seem to have exerted some higher influence on their mystic god-lore. In their gods man becomes, in a word, divinised. In the Homeric god-world, we find monarchical polytheism clearly developed. Zeus is king of kings. *Moirā*, or fate, may seem to be set above him, and yet fate is really regarded as his own will. His *βουλή*, or council of the gods, may meet at Olympus, but only to learn his will. And the gods were in being long before Homer: if Greek religion was fixed by Homer's poems, that is not to say that pre-Homeric religion was unimportant or is

unknown. Homer and Hesiod but "composed" the "generations" of the gods. Plato tells us that early Greek religion had earth, sun, moon, and stars for its gods. But the Olympian religion did not fail to invest these powers with human virtues and feelings, so that they no longer appeared blind and irrational, but humanised and individualised. A very intense but intelligible anthropomorphic type of religion, it must be said. But the early Greek poets believed the gods to reward the good and punish the wicked. Homer and Hesiod alike regard Zeus as punishing the man who sins against *δίκη*, of which he is guardian. Pausanias and Herodotus alike tell us what Homer did for the early Greek religion, with its undifferentiated gods—its Pelasgian worship of fetich stones and pillars—by transforming its symbols into persons. Pelasgian religion was helped by Egypt—so Herodotus plainly tells us—in the effort to give form and personality to its gods. But theirs was a mere beginning of things, to await, for long after, the varied and complex forms of the Homeric pantheon. Much help in these matters has in recent years been derived from prehistoric archæology. Pelasgian religion was taken up by the Hellenes of the North, to whom, according to Thucydides, Greek national unity was first due. From this unity sprang the Pantheon, with its differentiated deities. Greek theology was shaped by literature, as we see in

Homer, who certainly did not take his gods—made, as they were, in the likeness of men—very seriously. Finely does the free creative spirit of the Greeks show itself in the construction of their religious conceptions or beliefs, however much reflection might have left to do in clearing away anthropomorphic defects. These Homeric gods, however, have clearly overpassed everything that savoured of conflict with hostile powers of nature, for Olympic rule over nature and man has been placed beyond dispute. There came at length to be “a divine aristocracy of many gods,” with a “not very effective sovereignty of Zeus.” Anthropomorphic polytheism has, in fact, never risen higher than here. What conflict obtained among the gods themselves is often seen to be due to the racial character of the Homeric gods. Plastic art had its share, as well as literature, in giving form and expression to Greek religious thought. What perplexed that early thought was the fact that the gods could do evil, guardians though they were of the moral law. It was this perplexity which, under the growth of philosophy, endangered the national faith. Though Homer does far more than represent rude and primitive thought, yet religious ritual is in Homer of the simplest, consisting of prayer and sacrifice. Herodotus tells of another ritual, that of the Olympian rites superimposed on the cult of heroes. Blood-curse and haunting ghost and magical purification—such things do not belong to Homer. Neither do

the Mysteries, for Demeter and Dionysos are not even in his Olympus. Plato says¹ that Homer's mythological teachings as to the gods were neither "reverent" nor "profitable"—not even self-consistent. Speaking of Plato, one may say that primitive mythology and the Orphic developments supplied Plato with the clue to some of his finest and most fruitful imaginings, his cosmic Eros and his *Anamnesis* among them. It is a wonderful thing to have to say that Greek religion never lost the stamp which, in the hour of its creation, the free imagination of Homer put upon its every feature. Homeric religion has, especially in the *Odyssey*, not a little that may be harmonised with philosophical conceptions. But never must it be forgotten that, joyous as Greek religion might be, it yet lacked not in pessimistic elements, such as the dread smitings and death agonies of which the *Iliad* speaks:—

βάλλ'. αἰεὶ δὲ πυρὰν νεκύων καίοντο θαμναί.

Awakening reflection was not without anxiety as to its hopes and destinies, which latter lay on the knees of the gods. To the general Greek mind, Homer and Hesiod were, according to Herodotus, the original sources of their god-lore. The Hesiodic writings have the earliest mention of mystery-worship. How truly that which was physical was first, and only afterwards that which was intellectual, in the Hesiodic

¹ See Republic, ii. 380.

theology and the Orphic lore, may be seen in the lowly fact that the birth of things is therein represented as proceeding from an egg. But, indeed, in all Greek theology there is no such conception as the universe being the handiwork of a pre-existent divinity: rather the divinities are evolved out of the universe, or one or other of its physical elements. That is to say, there is lack of the conception of real freedom in the relation of Deity to the world. From the Orphics, however, sprang the hope of immortality, which man was to share by union with Deity. The Homeric conception, even of Zeus, is not invariable, his official character as exponent of the common will of the gods being one thing, and his character as an individual another. Zeus is the guardian of the Iliad, while mention is made by Agamemnon of the visitations of "the gods" upon them that swear falsely. So, in the Odyssey, appeal is made from the gods to Zeus by Telemachus, "if perchance Zeus will punish the wickedness of the suitors." It is Zeus himself who, more than once in the Iliad, says, "Our altar never lacked seemly feast." Around the crude naturalism of prehistoric religion there had been woven "the delicate moonlit web of poetic fiction," which might soften and spiritualise it, but could not keep it from the onsets of critical reflection. Homeric gods, in view of the attacks of Xenophanes, were no fit subjects for man's imitation. Homer has, however, been sometimes

taken, by his humanised divinities, to register advance, at once intellectual and moral, on the crude narrations of Hesiod, who first attempted to construct a theory of the universe in his "Theogony." But even in Homer, the gods are still treated in the purest and simplest naturalistic form possible; for every spiritual fact there is only a sensuous expression, and man is but the puppet of the gods.

Pindar has, in his religious feeling, a deep sense of Divine Power, and human dependence: to him Zeus is god of gods in his power and will. "*Εν ἀνδρῶν, ἔν θεῶν γένος*," "one is the race of men, one that of gods," says "bold, electric Pindar." Pindar has been able to say, with the significant theanthropic addition, *ἐκ μιᾶς δὲ πνέομεν ματρὸς ἀμφότεροι*, "from one mother we both draw our breath." Time, for him, was "the proof of real truth," so dear to him the "fair-throned Hours."

In Æschylus, we find an absence of conscious antagonism to the popular belief in the gods above, although we are bidden beware of over-ripe prosperity and avenging calamity. The Greek tragedians are interpreters of life, and Æschylus, with his lyrical sublimity, is their prophet. But it must be accounted strange, for all that, that Æschylus, like Homer, fails of any attempt to analyse the passion of love, which, for its own intrinsic worth and interest, first comes to its own in Euripides. To Æschylus, love is but a cosmic force, to Sophocles but a factor in destiny.

In his religious teachings, Æschylus seeks to harmonise many and diverse elements—law and life, fate and will, man and God: he sees primitive myth, ancient tradition, and actual event, each and all with a religious eye. Æschylus has the signal merit to bring good out of the seeming cruelty and malignancy of Zeus, and to shadow forth the supremacy of personal Will—Will which is, in him, really superior to Fate. In his reconstruction of the myth of Prometheus, the strong ideality of Æschylus seeks to show the need of submitting to the will of Zeus, and the tragic nature of the spiritual conflict for the right. He discards the old doctrine of the envy of the gods, and works under the conception of divine or higher law—law still external. Zeus, on his representation, appears in none too good a light; but then Zeus, we must remember, figures mainly in the statements of his adversaries. Thus Æschylus speaks of Zeus and his “tyranny”; tells us “none is free but Zeus”; asserts that “Zeus lawlessly holds sway” further maintains that “Zeus is harsh and keeps justice to himself”; and finally avers “it is a harsh despot and irresponsible who rules.”¹ Much of this harshness is attributed to the newness of the power of Zeus—

ἅπας δὲ τραχύς, ὅστις ἄν νέον κρατῇ.

But, though Prometheus attracts us, and we are

¹ See Prom. Vinct., 10, 50, 150, 188, 324, 326.

tempted to view him, with his unconquerable fortitude, in the light of a martyr, yet we may not forget his real disobedience and faithless distrust of Zeus, the character in which he first appears. In the "Eumenides" of Æschylus, we have the Erinyes, of old vengeful and inexorable, transformed into the Eumenides, beneficent guardians of law and order, a transformation wrought of persuasion rather than of force. An improvement upon the "Persæ," certainly, wherein Zeus punishes the overweening, and ὕβρις brings on a harvest of ἄτη. Their supreme god is made subject to the law of development, passing into righteousness from lawlessness, under the teaching of Time.¹ The god of Æschylus may be but a god of righteousness in the making, but, at any rate, our poet will make men feel that Divine Law is inexorable in its requirements. The tragedies of Æschylus are pervaded by a strain of sorrow—there is in them a refrain of woe—but, amid all, he will have it that we can, and must, let "the good prevail." This is better than we have in Isocrates, whom we find plainly stating that calamities and visitations were sometimes set down to gods wearing other than a beneficent aspect. The "Agamemnon," the "Supplices," and the "Persæ," all voice the baneful effects of wrong-doing, and the heaven-ordained calamities that await man's arrogance, insolence, and impiety. Æschylus would show a new order prevailing over

¹ Prom., 981.

the old, but he would yet set forth that new order as taking up into itself what was best in the old. Drawing from the cycle of prehistoric legend, Æschylus lifts up events from the course of earthly circumstance to higher intervention, and so becomes, in a way, the poet of the supernatural—of a Zeus who has become just, and not unfriendly to man. And, on the human side, Æschylus fails not courageously to tell men that wisdom comes through suffering, and—as in the “Eumenides”—that fear may be necessary guardian of the soul, teaching to revere the right. To Æschylus the evil of the gods is apparent rather than real. So far as monotheism is concerned, it cannot be said that Æschylus rises beyond the view of Xenophanes, that “there is one god greatest among gods and men”—

Εἷς θεὸς ἔν τε θεοῖσι καὶ ἀνθρώποισι μέγιστος,

and that He is not like to man in mind or body—

οὔτε δέμας θνητοῖσιν ὁμοίος οὔτε νόημα.

The dramatic genius of Sophocles admits a more humanly operative rational element in the “unwritten and steadfast laws of the gods”—*ἄγραπτα κάσφαλῇ θεῶν νόμιμα*.¹ Peace is promised to the woe-worn Œdipus “when he shall come to the seat of awful

¹ Antig., 454.

divinities," and the prayer is breathed, "Be not harsh to Phœbus and to me"—

Φοίβῳ τε κάμοι μὴ γένησθ' ἀγνώμονες.¹

The impartiality of the Greek spirit finds expression in the peerless portraiture of Sophocles: the violation by Œdipus, unwittingly, of family law, is visited with punishment, and harmony comes at last only as he accepts his pain as not unmerited. Human insufficiency, before life's high ends, is a fundamental note in Sophocles, accompanied as it is by a deep sense of all that is great and noble in man's origin and destiny. The power of Fate, and the futility of individual will, in its effort to flee from destiny, are set forth by Sophocles with definiteness exceeding far that of Æschylus. He makes Œdipus take a quite modern view of his so-called crimes—better termed misfortunes—of which it is said, they were "suffered rather than done"—

ἐπεὶ τά γ' ἔργα μου
πεπονθότ' ἐστὶ μάλλον ἢ δεδρακότα.²

And the poet gives us the lasting word of remonstrance,—"Dost thou with right condemn the unwilling deed?"—

Πῶς ἂν τό γ' ἄκον πρᾶγμ' εἰκότως ψέγοις?³

But there is in Sophocles, despite his psychologic

¹ Œd. Col., 86-91.

² Ibid., 266, 267.

³ Ibid., 977.

power and range, no glimpse of the modern mode of reconciliation of our tragic inner conflicts, only a still, melancholic resignation remains before the despotic will of Deity, which is being fulfilled in the order of the world. This is well seen, for example, in the unrelieved sadness of the sacrifice of Antigone, magnificent as it is in its strength. In the pathetic story of Philoctetes, in the crimes of Œdipus, in the madness of Ajax, and in the vengeance of Orestes and Electra, we have the oft-repeated exemplification of individual will or purpose colliding with the divine order, so that the relentless character of Fate may appear. 'Tis of the irony of life that direst evil is seen to follow the might of Ajax, the love of Deianeira, the power of Creon, and the wisdom of Œdipus. Taking up the idea of destiny, from the hands of Æschylus, Sophocles sets it in close connection with the working of man's will. In Æschylus we have resignation to evils that are god-sent inculcated in the "Persæ"; in the "Septem contra Thebes," submission is taught; and in the "Agamemnon," it is said that justice will be done to the humble. But in Sophocles, the moral issues cannot be said to be less perplexing, even though some attempt may be here made to show, in language always stately, but never turgid, that the law of Divine justice works, in some sort, in man as law of his own reason. The consequences of men's acts are inexorably set forth as pursuing them, whether they have been conscious and

responsible or not; as, for example, *μοῖρα* in the case of Laius.¹ Man is set forth as a "plaything of gods," of gods whose ways are not comprehensible or free of malignity. Still, in the end Sophocles would show that destiny involves something of the nature of moral law, and that the conflict of right with opposing right is one which must not cease till higher right shall prevail. For the conflict is never so tragic as when opposing claims are those of right, each with some valid grounds of its own. In Sophocles there is ethical tendency, and the play of passion is set forth as related to an end. The play of passion, indeed, is not the highest thing in the tragedies of either Æschylus or Sophocles: more than violent event or passionate movement is life itself, that life which, in its meaning and misery, in its strange affinities and superb submissiveness to unknown powers, they so grandly set before us. In Æschylus and Sophocles alike we have more than the endeavours of mortals to escape retribution and fate: we have a revelation of life, wherein are disclosed moral values, of which we had not otherwise dreamed. What a sample of this is the "Philoctetes" of Sophocles, and what light radiates from his *Antigone*! A superb cleaving to virtue — to virtue which fortune and destiny hold not in respect—and a wise discernment of the duty to which life shall devote itself, are among those needs of the soul which the Greek tragic poets

¹ CEd. Tyr., 711.

have once and for all set before us with stupendous force. Such ethical endeavour might, no doubt, be helped by that heterogeneous thing called Greek religion, in so far as this latter might help keep alive a religious feeling. In Sophocles, less than in Æschylus or in Euripides, do religious forms or rituals shine through the tragedies, this as part of the greater naturalness sought by Sophocles. On the other hand, the gods do not shine by the scant aid they render to virtuous souls, such as even an Antigone or a Neoptolemus. Surely the gods might have better seen to the enforcement of some sort of justice between man and man, and not have been concerned alone to inspire awe and fear before their own blind and arbitrary behests. Little wonder that Sophocles, looking out on life's strange calamities, should think it folly to wish to live long, and should account it best never to have been born.¹

When we turn to Euripides, we find a large faith in the heroic capabilities of human nature, so that he greatly trusts in the power of morality apart from religion. Euripides keenly feels the difficulty of reconciling divine justice with the facts of life, but he boldly declares gods that do wrong to be "no gods" at all. The externality of the law of destiny has, in him, greatly vanished. Euripides had studied philosophy under Anaxagoras, who knew how to leave the gods alone. Euripides stands strongly

¹ Œd. Col., 1210 *et seq.*

marked by his rejection of the polytheistic religion; the gods, with him, lead an independent existence. In his adherence to a moral ideal, Euripides directs his criticism mainly against the Homeric poems. Euripides not only bore a part in overthrowing the mythological, but also stood, in some sense, for freedom of thought over against the power of authority. He invites us to the life of rational thought and ideals. He perceives that in this way humanity moves toward the light, and he finds the true tragedy of life in making the inner life dominate the outer. Where his theme most closely resembles that of *Æschylus*, however, the ethical inferiority of Euripides is sometimes strikingly manifest, even when his dramatic skill suffers not by comparison. The spirit of distressing doubt marks him, or at least a questioning attitude. To both of them, however, life, with its infinite awe and mystery, is more than art, in which respect they both stand contrasted with the calm, masterful, æsthetic *Sophocles*. Religious as both *Æschylus* and Euripides are, they are so with a difference. *Æschylus*, stern and resolute, is content to set forth the old faith, with its accent of fateful doom. Euripides, on the other hand, found himself in midst of new influences, of which he could not but take note—influences national, domestic, intellectual, religious. Not even the speculations of early Ionic philosophers could leave him untouched,

and the same is even more true of teachings like those of Heraclitus and Anaxagoras, the latter of whom taught that Mind had turned chaos into the universe. But, of course, Euripides approaches the religious problem from the side of feeling rather than of thought, and hence the realistic character of his treatment. Small wonder if the spiritual sovereigns of the Homeric Olympus came short, in the view of Euripides, and furnished no adequate grounds for reverence. But in Euripides the centre of gravity is shifted from destiny to man, for we may surely say that to Euripides man's destiny is, in some real sense, not about him, but within. One may remark, in passing, that his contemporary, Democritus, in like spirit, declared happiness to be a thing of the soul, not of things that perish. But Democritus, with his atomic theory, was to wait long ere justice should be done to his scientific and ethical merits. Euripides is keenly sensitive to the moral injustices of life; there is for him no certainty before the capricious power called fate, or chance, that the man who now fares well may not yet fare ill; the gods feed their worship on human ignorance:—

Φύρουσι δ' αὐτὰ θεοὶ πάλιν τε καὶ πρόσω,
 Ταραγμὸν ἐντιθέντες, ὥς ἀγνωσία
 Σέβωμεν αὐτούς.¹

¹ Hecuba, 959-961.

Earlier, Euripides has made Talthybius say—

“Zeus, shall I say that thou regardest men ?
Or that we hold in vain this false belief,
Thinking there is indeed a race of gods,
While fortune sways all human destinies ?”

The evil that men think of the gods Euripides is constrained to disbelieve; hence says Iphigenia, “I do not think any of the gods is bad.”¹ Besides, the gods are not the capricious and arbitrary powers they appear to be, but are themselves under law. This Hecuba is made expressly to declare—

“The gods are strong, and law which ruleth them :
For 'tis by law we have our faith in gods,
And live with certain rules of right and wrong.”²

In the “Hippolytus” and elsewhere, Euripides makes some attempt to reconcile fate with Providence or Divine Will, so that they may not be thought adverse forces.³ In the “Bacchæ,” Euripides points out the hopelessness of attaining full communion with the Divine by reason alone, rather than by life in its whole scope and fulness, and sets forth the power and joy of piety with rare strength and beauty. Yet does he think no charm of music exists that can assuage the griefs and sorrows of earthly existence.⁴ His comfort lies only in the fact that Divine justice is never far off, and that the might

¹ Iph. Taur., 389.

² Hipp., 1103 *et seqq.*

³ Hec., 799 *et seq.*

⁴ Medea, 199 *et seqq.*

of gods, however slowly set in motion, is sure enough in its punitive effects.¹ Thus we have seen how Euripides, with nihilistic and agnostic tendencies, seeks to transcend the external mythical modes of thought, and to find the spiritual powers of life within man's soul, as truly as in those Divine factors that lie above and without.

In these great Greek tragic poets, in their age the instructors of Greece, we cannot help seeing how near, in their addresses to Deity, they came to Christian conceptions, but neither can we fail to see that not all the joy and splendour of Grecian life sufficed to take away the undertone of sadness and lamentation. Death was accepted with noble resignation, but not without dread and sorrow; and it cannot be said that the moral value of their belief in a future life was great. It was reserved for Plato to raise the vague hope of the Greeks in immortality to a practical incentive to virtue. They brought forth no solution of human life, so weak and errant in its nature, that could take away the unhappiness that remained for the Greek consciousness. The outer cheerfulness of Greek mythological religion could not conceal the tragic despair that remained within, from the struggle with adverse and inexorable fate. Already we have seen the Greek moral conscience developing, with the result that there has been a qualitative transformation in virtue of which

¹ *Bacchæ*, 822 *et seqq.*

the rather envious and quarrelsome gods of Homeric time have given way to the just and wise gods of Pindar, Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides. More than this, there has discernibly been at work a tendency towards unitary and monotheistic conception, to which expression was early given by Antisthenes, the Cynic founder. This monotheistic tendency is seen in the soaring towards the contemplation of a Zeus that should be absolute divinity—a soaring which sinks within the regional limitations of fate almost as soon as it is made. Still, the fact remains of the dominating influence of the idea of Fate in Greek tragedy, in which the conditions and the limits of human happiness are set forth. Always the fates guide and control the destinies of men, and fulfilment of the heavenly decrees is all that is open to man. Life is seen steadily, and is seen whole, although the conception is miniature in character. There is no lack of study of its principles and boundaries; everywhere it runs up to meet the divine. Everywhere upon it the fact of superhuman control is writ large, everywhere it lies embosomed in law. It was a merit, surely, that they were not content—as even a Shakespeare was so well content to do—to depict human life or society without its due setting in the cosmos. For that alone could give it due meaning or significance. Yet is there no coldness in the Greek treatment: what greater pathos or warmth of tenderness could we wish than that of the “Alcestis” of Euri-

pides, the "Electra" of Sophocles, or the "Eumenides" of Æschylus? The very perfection of the Greek drama sprang from its religious elements and associations, and its highest advantages were due precisely to the imperfections of the religion that was therein represented. That religion had enough defect and absurdity in its principles—had enough of halting and inconsistent result, with gods of so many foibles and weaknesses—to make its elements fit themes for dramatic representation. In speaking thus of the place of the gods in the Greek drama, we are not doing so in forgetfulness of the respect shown to the gods in not making the greater gods play leading parts in Greek tragedy. They are near, no doubt, but they wait till their hour has come, when they stand forth as administrators of eternal justice, or as executioners of the decrees of destiny. The main places of their drama are held by their kings, who, as human, easily evoked the sympathy of their fellow-men. The gods did not always occupy the background, with intent to urge on or to avert some awful catastrophe, but sometimes for fulfilment of beneficent purposes; as, for example, when Æschylus makes Zeus that mild potentate "Who leads mortals in the ways of wisdom,"¹ or when Sophocles speaks of the "great Zeus in heaven"—

μέγας οὐρανῷ
Ζεὺς, ὃς ἐφορᾷ πάντα καὶ κρατύνει—

¹ Agam., 176.

as one whose aid the fatherless may implore.¹ It is true, nevertheless, that, as it was, for the most part, due to the poetic imagination that Olympus was peopled with the humanities of the gods, there could not, to advancing reflection, be so very great difference between gods and men as to make the former unsuitable subjects for representation—even, at times, for amusement. Thus tragedy bore a religious character by reason of the fluid and shifting forms of Greek mythology. The decay of the national religion was largely due to the growth of philosophic thought. It owed, indeed, its *coup-de-grâce* to philosophy. We have not merely the critical efforts of Xenophanes, and the new religious tendency of Pythagoras, to consider, but the scepticism bred of doctrine like that of Heraclitus—*πάντα ῥεῖ*—and of the emphasis of the philosophers on the sufficiency of natural causes and the fixity of natural law.

The conception of Fate, which we have seen to bulk so largely in Greek religion, is extremely unsatisfying, containing, as it does, no manner of solution of the world's riddle. Fate supplies neither rational ground nor motive: it is a bare inevitableness that the event is thus, and not otherwise. Fate not only lacks feeling and sense, but its decrees are devoid of end. What conception could be more empty? Matters would have been much worse, had not the idea of justice taken so deep hold on the

¹ Elec., 175.

Greek mind, with the fearsome form of *δίκη* as standing by the throne of Zeus: in the tragedians, each one's destiny comes to be marked out by Nemesis only with some sort of relation to guilt, personal or relative—a growth of the conception which could not be without some developing power for conscience. The burden is thus thrown on man's personal will. Passages are by no means wanting that show the relation of fate to Divine will to be complementary rather than antagonistic, so that fate becomes indeed only another name for the will of Zeus. This is so, for example, in the "Supplices," and in the "Prometheus," where "none is free but Zeus" (50), and "in no wise shall the counsels (*βουλαί*) of mortal men overstep the harmony of Zeus" (551). But it was in philosophic historians like Thucydides and Polybius, and in orators like Demosthenes, that the emphasis was to be transferred from fate to character. The Stoics, as we know, erected fatalism into a dogma, but their conception of all-prevailing law—whether Fate or Providence or Will of Zeus—strengthened their sense of duty, and threw them back on virtue as sole good with beneficial result.

Turn we now to Aristophanes, that master of ancient comedy, who, deeply religious himself, wrote for a religious people, albeit he paid but scant respect to the gods. Aristophanes waxes wroth against the relaxation in his time of ancient discipline and traditional beliefs—a relaxation due, in his view, to

the new culture and dialectic training lowering the moral tone and fibre. He played a part against the teaching of the Sophists, which to him seemed subversive of religion and morality, inveighing against Socrates in the "Clouds" in this connection in no happy or illumined manner. The Sophists, it may be said, in passing, were only, in some degree, responsible for the growing unbelief, which was voiced by their chief exponent, Protagoras. But to return to Aristophanes. In the "Frogs" and elsewhere, he pursues Euripides with his power of parody, turning the work of this tragedian into ingenious ridicule—the earliest instance of such a form of literary criticism. Not all the buffoonery, in which Aristophanes was fain to indulge, must keep us from doing justice to the deeper and more religious side of this superb master of Attic dialect. Even Plato was able to say, on occasion, that the Graces had chosen his soul for their abode. Lacking the dignity and gravity of the tragic poets whom we have already considered, Aristophanes has yet extremely polished style and finely finished art, which he usually places at the service of some important aim. We must allow for the fact that he took the world as he found it, and for the fact of what that world was. Plato owed not a little of his superlative rhetorical power and graceful style of expression to the comedies of Aristophanes. Such comic poets as Menander and Alexis did not in

general show an absence of religious belief, but mingled elevated thought with their humour.

In the sphere of Greek prose Herodotus meets us with his archaic taste and oft-repeated assertion of the envy of the gods—a Divine envy which at times wears really the guise of mercy and beneficence. Herodotus is not less pious than he is just, but his devoutness is hardly of an impressive type. The simplicity which marks him does not keep him from having no faith in even Divine predictions, which to him are purposely misleading. In his pages we have reflected the pessimistic view of life, alike, for example, in the tears of Xerxes before the transient character of man's life, and in the pathetic lament of the reply which met him, that there is no man who is so fortunate as not to have felt, "not only once, but many times, the wish to die rather than to live"—

πολλάκις, καὶ οὐκὶ ἀπαξ, τεθνάναι βούλεσθαι μᾶλλον
· ἢ ζῶειν.¹

Everywhere Herodotus, who lived in the past, is a narrator of early tale and event, hardly less suitable and fit, than is Homer as singer of early legends. Indeed, he is simpler and more faithful in the use of legendary lore or material than is Thucydides, who so compounds his material with political theory that the result is something which is neither legend nor

¹ Herod. vii. 46.

history. The feeling of Herodotus for Greek life, Greek event, Greek glory, Greek unity, is as perfect as we should well expect, and pervades all his history, with its stories, tales, and moral reflections on the gods and the gains of adversity. The Divine power is to Herodotus only a kind of Nemesis or fate, which keeps poor mortals within the limits of their finitude. In his philosophy of history there is a "forethought" (*προνοία*) or providence at work as touching things both small and great.¹ Final causes thus exist for him, and the world for him moves under Divine governance. Scarcely has the idea of a moral necessity become in Herodotus anything like a distinct general conception. It is against the danger of too great prosperity in the world Herodotus would warn us, as likely to awaken the jealousy of the gods, in which insistence he, though historian, is very much in accord with the dramatic representations of the poet *Æschylus*.

Passing to Thucydides, we find an historian of humanity, and a teacher of abstract political wisdom, to whom all vaticination was delusive. Thucydides is the complement of Herodotus, showing us the other side of the shield in his wary, sceptical endeavours to preserve Greek balance, Greek dignity, and Greek impartiality of mind—an impartiality "grand," as Jowett termed it. Not that it is a monopoly of Thucydides, being also marked in Homer. But, in

¹ Herod. iii. 108.

both, it saves from giving form and colour to what they narrate from patriotic or personal sympathies—from anything, indeed, save a characteristic, noble, and truth-loving impartiality. Hence, to the surprise of men, Thucydides has been able to speak of Antiphon, traitor to the democracy, as “a man inferior in virtue to none of his contemporaries.” I am aware, of course, that some hold the history of Thucydides to be shaped by political notions and preconceived theory. One needs such a literary foil as we find in Xenophon—vain and absorbed in small passions of the moment—for bringing out the merits of Thucydides. Singular, for his time, is Thucydides in his freedom from proneness to pass moral judgments. One cannot think of him without seeing in him, to some extent, a precursor of the spirit of a Ranke, critical, colourless, impartial, sincere, and self-controlled. Such credit must be given to Thucydides, even if rigid or scientific historic method tends to break down in him under pressure of the artistic instinct of the age in which he lived. And he was able on occasion to deplore the decay of faith, which was no doubt due to providential permission of seeming violations of natural justice. Contemporary of Sophocles as he is, Thucydides speaks as if from a different world—and the same holds good of his other contemporary, Herodotus, though for different reasons—such difference being due to the function of the historian being other than that of the poet. Dignified,

and sometimes over-condensed and obscure in style, Thucydides showed his primacy in setting events in their just relations, and tracing them to their causes. With face turned towards the future, Thucydides is lifted above the men of his own time, and his veiled subjectivity has given us a treasure-house of wisdom for all time, despite the fact that he knows nothing of supernatural interference in mundane affairs. Piety, to Thucydides, counted for little against the fate of gods. Polybius, also, philosophically traced events to their causes in character, but with defective technique.

The theanthropic relation of God and man, so wanting to Herodotus, who is quite innocent of doctrine like *ὁμοίωσις*, is strikingly voiced by Aratus, and by Cleanthes in a beautiful and astonishing Hymn, which clearly points the way to a more intelligent spiritual worship. Here we can take no account of many points of religious significance in Greek lyric poets like Sappho and Simonides, elegiac poets like Theognis and Solon, or philosophic poets like Empedocles, with his calm, didactic tone. It must suffice to note that the Hellenistic period was marked by widespread worship of Chance or Fortune, and the heavenly bodies. In some of the Alexandrian poets, Theocritus, Callimachus, Apollonius, Lycophron, &c., there is not a little of expressive Greek poetry, and of mythological allusion, but artificialities and defects are not wanting of a kind to

mark a declension from Athenian art. For literature and life had become sundered in Alexandria, a result not without effect upon the work of Aristarchus, the great Alexandrian critic.

We are now in a position to form some sort of estimate of the contribution of Greek literature to the world's religious thought. For, is it not evident what a splendid propædæutic of Christian thought and teaching this literature was? Can we not see that Christianity came to supply just what this literature lacked, but yet nobly strove and reached after? Partial and incomplete as might be the teachings of Æschylus and Sophocles anent the rights and claims of violated law, sombre and imperfect as might be the views of Euripides regarding human destiny, these all had a sense of Divine law, as holy, just, inevitable, and a feeling after some more unified and harmonious mode of existence than they here knew. No doubt, their hopes and feelings were inchoate and imperfect, such as we speak of in Wordsworth's lines of the "Excursion"—

"Man is of dust : Ethereal hopes are his,
Which, when they should maintain themselves aloft,
Want due consistence : like a pillar of smoke
That with majestic energy from earth
Rises, but, having reach'd the thinner air,
Melts, and dissolves, and is no longer seen." ¹

But still, when the Apostle of the Gentiles came to

¹ Excursion, iv.

unfold on the Areopagus the truths of the seventeenth chapter of the Acts, what was he doing but giving more perfect form and full-voiced expression to those truths which the great Greek poets had dimly, inarticulately felt, to wit, the truths that the law had made nothing perfect, that religious feeling—as their *δεισιδαιμονία* showed—had its place, that the future life awaited man in its completeness, and that the reign of righteousness in God was already begun? Worship was being carried out into wider temple than any of Olympian Zeus or of Athene, even into a temple not made with hands. But in Greek literature and thought, a soil had been prepared, and a suitable *nidus* made ready for the new teachings; for men's thought, in that early spring-time of humanity, had not been able of itself to wring the secrets from life and the world. But the results, however inadequate, were great and valuable, in their richness of suggestion and intuition. The greatness of that contribution has been proved by the persistent influence exerted by Greek poetry, Greek systems, and Greek ideas, on all subsequent generations. That marvellously vital result is due to the creative literature of Greece, from Homer to Demosthenes, having kept in close and constant touch with life, and to its having, as a consequence, been marked by natural and persistent growth, and spontaneity of consciousness. For the literature of Greece is the one really original literature in Europe,

and so it has been the groundwork of all later literature. Its ideas have found their way into all modern—not to speak of mediæval—literature, and have wielded the most subtle and potent influence. Surely the way in which Æschylus lives in Shelley, and Euripides in Browning, are sufficient examples, to which, however, we may add the Hellenic influence patent in Swinburne's "Atalanta in Calydon," and, as earlier examples, the influence of Plato in Spenser, George Herbert, and Wordsworth. The dawn of modern tragedy already lies in Euripides, the conflict of mighty spiritual powers is already foreshadowed in Æschylus and Sophocles, and modern criticism of life is, in fact, already anticipated in Homer, Archilochus, and their successors. We have seen how these Greek poets are to be judged by their ethical worth and religious import: we have no right to expect in them those results of moral experience and wisdom which have been won only through long centuries of suffering; but we may claim for them wondrous simplicity, beauty, balance, truthfulness, vividness, insight into essential passion, self-restraint, and moral wisdom, the whole making them founts of perennial delight. And when, to them, we add the philosophers of Greece, with whom we are not now mainly concerned, with what sincere and simple faith we find a Socrates holding to the existence of Divine Powers, Divine care of men, Divine gifts for men, Divine Will to be accom-

plished by men. Again, with what unruffled serenity we find a Plato contemplating life, with what sublime faith we find him holding to one eternal, never-changing God, Who is good, and to the superiority, worth, and beauty of heavenly virtue. So, too, with what splendid tenacity we find an Aristotle holding to reason as supreme faculty of the soul, to whose perfect realisation man must continually approximate, even though his philosophy sat loosely to positive religion. He yet loved the gods as a matter of course. But religious belief had become too much robbed of its content, as it already had been in Plato's time. Even in Homeric times, the social bond—for so it should be called—between gods and men was not without religious significance: in the days of Epaminondas, we see what rare delicacy of conscience, and fine moral earnestness, philosophy had been able to produce. Philosophy, in later Greece, grew more literary in character. The aim of the Greek thinkers had been to make the world a more fit and worthy habitation for man: from Socrates to the Stoics they believed in the existence of the gods, but always was "Hellas the nurse of man complete as man." Nothing could have been finer than the insistences of Socrates and Plato on the worth of the soul or moral personality.

The Hellenic religion, as exemplified in Greek Literature, bore to the end the character mainly of a nature-religion. This, in spite of its large infusion

of ethical sentiment, and in spite, also, of the moral progress of its gods through the advances of culture and poetry. That religion made life joyous and free in its own way, for it saw in every manifestation of nature a divine element. It partook of a large and generous inclusiveness in its character, and was not poor in the peculiarly Greek sense of proportion, nor in equilibrium of powers and harmonious development of aptitudes. But, though these things were so, and though the Greek poets might ethically construe nature-myths according to their own will, yet the gods were nature-gods still, and never did they get beyond the stage of being semi-ethical only. Not surprising, since Greek thought, after its first monistic movement, took the form of Nature-philosophies of dualistic character. It was a true and notable instinct that led their poets, however, not to sacrifice the interrelation subsisting between God and man, for such an element of religion could never be sacrificed. What has just been said illustrates yet further the position we have already taken up, that the Greek Literature was a superb propædæutic of the more spiritual and rational religion that was to be propounded by Saint Paul at Athens. The religious sanction was maintained, along with new ethical sanction, by Socrates, by Plato, and by the Stoics. Socrates was really the first to attempt to harmonise the old faith with the new: the good he left really undefined, making it, in an utilitarian

interest, simply what is useful for our wellbeing. Independent of Divine sanction this appeal of his to reason might be, but the principle of the new faith was, that "if gods exist, they are not evil"—a propædæutic of ethical Christianity. The "growth into the likeness of God,"—*ὁμοίωσις*,—which as a doctrine had been derived from the Mysteries and Pythagoreanism, was accorded high place by Plato. Foreshadowed in Socratic teaching, it became a cardinal point with the Stoics. What wonder that Saint Paul chose to repeat, *Τοῦ γὰρ καὶ γένος ἐσμὲν*. Plato strikingly made the soul's relation to Deity as God of Truth and Beauty one of love (*ἔρως*), and escaped utilitarianism by running the source of morality back into the source of existence, as did not Aristotle. But neither Platonic nor Stoic view could save the religion of Greece. Because neither man nor nation can continuously triumph without religious devotion, Athenian greatness was unable to survive the loss of living religious faith. But their loss was the world's religious gain, and they could have truly said, *Morientes vivimus*. The mention just made of Saint Paul leads me to say that, though our concern has been with Greek Classical Literature only, there is yet a vast—and in many ways too much neglected—body of Greek Christian Literature, which merits separate study and treatment. I shall content myself with only a few remarks on its relation to our subject, from the literary point of view

in particular. But first I will say of the Greek Apologists like Aristides, who, though iconoclastic, was a practical Christian philosopher; or Athenagoras, who was an Athenian Christian philosopher; or Justin, who, steeped in the most cultivated Hellenism of the time, found the highest expression of wise and rational philosophy in Christianity; of these, but not of these only, I will say that the originality and independence were, in their most difficult task, greater than has often been laid to their credit in our time. Hellenism left its stamp upon the style and humanistic qualities of Clement, while of scholars of the grand type Origen was certainly the first. After the way in which Greek moralists had treated Homer, the Alexandrians adopted the allegorical or sacramental method in literature, which in the end gained in Greek thought a place far too necessary. Such Christian poetry as then existed—even the poetic compositions of Gregory Nazianzen—were fast bound to the forms and measures of Classic Greek, albeit Gregory was the first to develop a type of poetry founded, not upon the quantity, but upon the tonic accent. When Athanasius appears, we find in him nothing of the man of letters, albeit he has plenty of Greek culture. The effects of classic style are very conspicuous in Basil. Far more noticeable, however, than any after-result of a literary character—although Greek was the natural organ of Christian literature, even in the Western Church—was the infusion of

the spirit of Greek philosophy into the Patristic philosophy; indeed, from the purely literary point of view, from the Attic aims of Philo and Josephus onwards, nothing is more blankly apparent than that the tender grace of a day that was dead came never back to Greece. No marvel, considering the Christian distrust of culture even in Alexandria. It needs no saying that what has just been affirmed is not less true of Aristobulus and of the "Wisdom of Solomon." But we can still remember, with Amiel, what barbarians we are by the side of the Greeks—in poetry and much besides, and can worthily cherish the literary standards of form and style, and the varied wisdom of life, which they, in their balance and unity of faculty, have left us.

CHAPTER III.

THE ROMANTIC MOVEMENT IN EUROPEAN LITERATURE.

ROMANTICISM may fitly be regarded, at the outset, with etymology as guide. The poetic tales of the Middle Ages, written in the old Romance dialects, were styled Romances. Romance, in its primary sense, was defined by Dr Johnson as a military fable of the Middle Ages, a tale of wild adventures in love and chivalry. These old romances, with their fantastic blendings and their mystical ecstasies, were rescued from the oblivion, in which they had long lain, by a small band of German poets towards the close of the eighteenth century. 'Twas this craving for the Middle Ages made these romantic poets sing—

“Moonlit night of strange enchantment
That the mind enthralled dost hold,
O thou wondrous world of faëry (*Märchenwelt*)
Rise in glory, as of old !”

Such was the lingering effect of the Charlemagne and Arthurian cycles of romance. To the spirit of

these poets the term "romantic" was applied, and, from this use of the term, we may pass to that larger sense, in which it denotes no mere reactionary mediævalism, but stands, broadly taken, for the preference, under Fichtean impulse, of the romantic to the classic, with all that this involves. It involves the preference of romantic subjectivism to classic objectivity, romantic individualism to classic typism, and romantic feeling or passion to classic repose and beauty. The varied tendencies or directions of this subjectivism comprise what is called Romanticism.

Among these are literary and æsthetic tendencies no less than philosophical and religious expressions. On the literary side, the Romantic movement was in Germany of permanent significance, while in England and France the movement was, in the earliest decades of the nineteenth century, of much importance and interest. Germany, England, and France are thus the countries where Romanticism made itself felt as an original and powerful force. Danish and Scandinavian literature became strongly influenced by German Romanticism, while the literature of the Slavonic countries took the impress mainly of English Romanticism. The European standpoint is the only satisfactory one from which to estimate the Romantic movement. Though working in varied forms and directions, Romanticism used æsthetic means most of all, and tended to judge artistic

products by their effects, rather than by the classic measure of rules and scorn of effect. It took the antique for too severe, plastic, and cold: it sought to reinstate the warm, musical, and homelike. It is perhaps as near as we can get to a definite and comprehensive definition of Romanticism, to say that it was a compound of chivalry, Mediæval Romance, Northern Literatures, and Christianity. Romanticism may indeed be broadly taken as the vital and necessary expression of feeling and phantasy—in any age or time—over against the purely passionless or unqualified deliverances of reason. A fresh current swept through European literature in the second half of the eighteenth century. This meant reaction against the intellectual outlook of the Augustan age. The aim of Romanticism—an ideal only partially fulfilled—was to make a more spiritual and imaginative life possible; and in nature it took the form of a protest against Philistine ideals, trivial interests, and cramped morality. Its æsthetic culture, already adverted to, was of a too self-absorbed character. Romanticism first arose into being as an enemy of the dry and unilluminated utilitarianism of the so-called enlightenment (*Aufklärung*), but came at length to vent itself against the classicism of its own time. True classicism there was in the poetic productions of Klopstock, Lessing, Goethe, and Schiller: like Sophocles and like Shakespeare, they believed in a true imitation of nature,

wherein the ethical law of justice is present. Romanticism was, no doubt, at the bottom a reactionary movement, with love of the past, and of artistic idealisations of the past, but it was not without serious historical interests, as we see from the Romantic School as it centred in Sir Walter Scott and the German Romanticists. Romanticism appealed to deeply-seated and long-neglected needs of the human mind, which the "shallow" Enlightenment had not brought within its ken. So fierce was the daylight of rationalism that German Romanticism felt driven to fall back upon love of the moonlight, dim, quivering, mysterious. The lightning glare of the French Revolution had deepened this love of the twilight. German Romanticism was an offset to the Cartesian philosophy, with its doctrine of clear ideas, for reality was to these romanticists not clear, and the philosophy of clear ideas not true. This negation of the Cartesian spirit held the real essence of things to be mysterious, intangible, inexpressible. Hence romantic Art is prone to be obscure, artificial, unreal, fictitious, whereas classic Art was lucid, real, majestic, intelligible. While romantic Art is dualistic, classic Art favours the principle of monism, as may be seen in the poetry of Goethe, Schiller, and Lessing. Romanticism in Germany—its proper home—was, by the middle of the nineteenth century, a real, conscious, and conspicuous reaction against the results of natural science. A new need was felt, by the

philosophy of Romanticism, to face justification of its ideas before the new scientific mode of viewing the world of nature. Not only a great deal of the literary wealth of Germany up to, say 1848, must be set down to the credit of the romantic movement, but also much of the music of Germany from Beethoven to Wagner. For Romanticism was not long in passing from literature into music, most romantic of the arts, where the term "romantic" retained its antithetical significance to the word "classical." Romanticism certainly cared more for musical interests than for the cultivation of more objective art concerns. There is no great need to dwell on specious statements which have been made as to our seeing, from the vantage-ground of time, how little any real or strong dividing line marks off the romantic from the classical; nor on those ingenious and paradoxical utterances, which have been put forward, about every classic being, in his own day, a romantic, and the romantic being, at a later period, accounted a classicist. The romantic developments of music, under the influence of Wackenroder, Tieck, and Hoffmann, we are not here concerned to follow, any more than we can follow painting, sculpture, and architecture, as they turned to mediæval art for inspiration and guidance. It must suffice to remark that Romanticism was more æsthetic than ethical, and that, not without reason, has Romantic art been said to consist in "glow of

spirit, with magic and richness of suggestion." That art was a visionary gleam. Winckelmann it was who kindled desire to study antique Art with what he called the "noble simplicity and calm grandeur" of Greek Art. But it needed Romanticism to bring emancipation from certain academic theories of Winckelmann, for Romanticism was a needful reaction against certain types of classicism in Art.

Now, although we have not excluded Romanticism, in its wider range of application, from our purview, yet our first and main attention must, in this connection, be devoted to it in the narrower sense of the Romantic school proper. This means, to begin with, that small band of German geniuses, associated with the name, whose chief representatives all came into the world between the years 1765 and 1775. The group includes the Schlegels, who were the critics of the movement; Tieck, its romancer and dramatist; Novalis and Stolberg, its poetic dreamers; Schelling, its metaphysician or philosopher *par excellence*; and Schleiermacher, its representative theologian. The Romantic Revival we shall, after that, consider more broadly as from 1770 to 1835. But the Romantic tendency appears so early in the history of philosophy as Plato, who is, in some sense, its earliest representative, while in Plotinus we have the classical ideal pretty well converted into a romantic one. The literary dawn of Romanticism lies in Alexandrian and later Greek literature,

where, though the strangeness, depth, and intensity of modern Romanticism may be wanting, we have yet passed from the poetry of passion and action to that of sentiment and emotion, of love and melancholy, of light and beauty. Alexandrian poets—Callimachus, Apollonius Rhodius, Theocritus, Bion Moschus,—as romancers indulged a fantastic and idealising tendency in marked contrast with the reserve and austerity of ancient Greece. No doubt, signs of the coming change are not wanting even in the days of Euripides, who may be taken as, in some sort, a precursor of Romanticism. In the later Greek literary developments, what Plutarch styled “the dark and insoluble riddle of love” came to be of central interest. The form of love melancholy, then evoked, was to be revived long afterwards in the Renaissance, typically in such a poet as Petrarch. But it is in poets of the Greek Anthology that we find romantic notes—often sad ones—most recurrent. It was not, however, before the second half of the eleventh century that Romance really arrived in European literature. The six centuries which immediately preceded that century were a preparation for Romance, particularly certain influences and events in the fifth, eighth, ninth, and tenth centuries. But on these we cannot dwell. We hasten to note the great Romantic developments of the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth centuries—such Romance being a parti-coloured garment, woven

of elements drawn from the fabulous East, the rugged North, and the dimly-lighted West. Strange mythologies found warm welcome from the Romantic frame of mind, and the large attempt at unity characteristic of the Middle Ages was an attempt at unity by comprehension—in contrast with classic endeavour to reach unity by exclusion. But we pass to speak of the more immediate precursors of the Romanticist movement in Europe. One of its chief pioneers was Rousseau, in whom we find a romantic lighting up of Nature. He may even be said to have headed, in his “return to nature,” that revolt of the emotions against the tyranny of the intellect, which contained the germ of the Romantic movement. Rousseau’s ‘Discourses,’ ‘Émile,’ ‘Confessions,’ ‘Dialogues,’ ‘Réveries,’ range from 1750 to 1778, and set all the classical canons at defiance. Negatively, Rousseau rebelled against the artificialities of an outworn civilisation: positively, he rejected the barren rationalism of Voltaire and the Encyclopædists, and allowed man’s nature intuitively to assert itself otherwise than merely through reason working upon material of the senses. Thus he shook the eighteenth century philosophy—from Locke to Condillac—and his “discovery of the deep-hidden nature of man” was expressly recognised by Kant. Thus was man, in Rousseau’s way, to be taken “as he came from the hands of the Creator.” Herder, whose first Romantic or individualistic impulse came

through Rousseau, constitutes himself one of the chief precursors of Romanticism by his inability to keep poetry, religion, and philosophy separate one from another. But, however Herder might seek to free the individual genius and make it fruitful, his was never an unhealthy individualism. To Herder Romanticism owed far more than to Lessing, founder though the latter was of the critical or destructive work continued by Herder. But Lessing was essentially constructive, and his vast range did much for Germany. From Herder, Romanticism derived the most characteristic elements of its literary criticism, — its broad and universal receptivity, its scientific study of language, and its idea of genius as without aim or purpose. But it is only just to Herder, at the same time, to say that the Romanticists carried the principle of unity, as Herder had insisted upon it, to absurd lengths, in their obliteration of the limits existing between art and life, religion and science, understanding and imagination, intellect and morality. Goethe and Schiller, by proclaiming the rights of passion and by opposing their age, prepared the way as the Dioscuri of the Romantic renaissance—Goethe with his increasing tendency to sacrifice reality to artistic form, and Schiller with his unrealistic tendency. It was not possible that two such poets should not be touched with the Romantic impulse: the touch of mystery Goethe postulated as a prime essential of the ballad: the

metrical compositions of Schiller are miracles of artistic perfection, despite their didacticism and their limitations in range. Another influence paving the way for Romanticism was the philosophy of Fichte—in particular, his doctrine of the ego, which gave to the Romantic individuality what force and vigour belonged to it. All exists through the activity of the ego, said Fichte, and the conclusion of his doctrine of knowledge (*Wissenschaftlehre*), was that the absolute Ego—which was but the human ego in its self-sufficiency and power—requires of the non-ego which it posits that it shall be in harmony with it. This Fichtean conception of the absolute power of the ego—the omnipotence of the creative imagination of the ego—was something that fired the enthusiasm of the age, until its expression became fantastic and absurd. No marvel, when everything was supposed to be developed from this ego, whose fundamental cognitive activity was the power of productive imagination. Fichte did not see that the creative imagination, in winning things for us from the void and formless infinite, was working only upon their form, not their substance. 'Tis the ego that, for him, determines the non-ego, and ascribes to it reality. The world is to Fichte a mere *Anstoss*, a point of resistance outside of thought, and it is to the faculty of productive imagination that Fichte ascribes this limiting of the infinitude of the ego. In all this we have Romanticist wor-

ship of the imagination already begun. It is generally, however, uncritically overlooked how Fichte stands differentiated from the Romanticists. He is free of their æsthetic arbitrariness, his fundamental tendency being ethical rather than æsthetic: he stands for reason, for knowledge, for will, and his Absolute is really reason, which is not void of law.

Romanticism had a large and sober appreciation of the great fact of historic development—which, however, it treated in a fashion too purely ideal—and so it aimed at a thorough understanding of past times and earlier conditions, with the moving forces that underlay them. In fact, the Romanticists nearly divinised the eternally human; they tracked its progressive development in and through history. Romanticism was buoyed up by a wondrous zeal for the unity of thought, and an unfaltering conviction of the truth of the ideal. But it had the defects of its merits: it had an insufficient grasp of the manifoldness of reality, and it lacked deep sense of the all-pervasive influence of law. Unheeding of the dangers of a loose and unbound subjectivism, it failed to realise that only in law is freedom to be found. It was, no doubt, incisive and stimulating, for it claimed the right to prove all things for itself; but it failed, in its devotion to instinct and its cult of genius, to appreciate the value of critical method; its faults were the hateful ones of haste and impatience,

from which we have yet by no means shaken ourselves free. The philosophy of Romanticism laid its stress on no mechanical means of explanation, but on that original and irreducible element which meets and defies analysis in personal and historical developments.

A famous definition of Romanticism, and one interesting in the light of history, is that of Ruge, who defined a Romanticist as "an author who, aided by all the intellectual advantages of our day, assails the periods of 'Enlightenment' and of revolution, and reprobates and combats the principles of pure humanitarianism in the domains of science, art, morality, and politics." It may as well be said, however, that perhaps no perfectly satisfactory definition of Romanticism has yet been given. Apart from definitions, it may be remarked as a noteworthy feature of German Romanticism, with which we are at this stage specially concerned, that its essence is aspiration—it really consists of mood, of melody, of longing; puts wish for will, like our own Shelley, and does not take shape in well-defined figures, such as we find in the Romantic movement of France. Romantic longing threw itself back into history, interpreting historic objects through feeling and phantasy; or into love, as in the 'Lucinde' of Schlegel, that was never satisfied. Reality, be it in nature or in history, is sacrificed in Romanticism by being taken as of value only as symbol for the

subject himself. It is easy to see how sentimental, womanish, and ultramontane tendencies arose amid the vacillations and weakness of such a movement. Some of the literary and social features of the development of the German school of Romanticism may be noted. It was Ludwig Tieck who led the way into the dim Romantic moonlight. The gentle Wackenroder, with somewhat feminine frame of mind, was among his intimate friends. From him Tieck caught his burning enthusiasm for the world of strange enchantment that lay glimmering in the old German *Marchen*, ballads, and folk-lore. In these, as Heine points out in one of his fine characterisations, the reader seems to be "in an enchanted forest," listening to the "melodious rush of subterranean fountains"; oft he fancies that, "amid the whispering of the trees," he hears "his own name called"; he sees strange magic-flowers gazing at himself "with their many-coloured yearning eyes"; he feels the kiss of "invisible lips" on his cheeks; just when all seems "breathing" and "shudderingly expectant," a "mediæval maiden," at once "gracious" and "beautiful," flies past on "white palfrey" in her hunt for "fabulous beasts" in the "magic forest." Such, says Heine, amid more of this sort, was the fancy of "our excellent Ludwig Tieck." A sense of mysterious awe, or intense mystery, is that which most surely follows such reading. Not the forest alone, but also the churchyard at dead of night, and

the hushed and ruined baronial pile, were among Tieck's most favoured haunts. Tieck carved out for himself, in the literature of Germany, a place all his own. Great popularity attended the Romanticism of Fouqué, whose 'Undine' in particular gained the high approval of Coleridge and others. Fouqué's work in general, however, carries too much of the characteristic unreality and fantastic nature of German Romanticism. The poetry of Novalis was of vague mystical tendency and phantasmal beauty, but it lacked virility in thought. Both Schiller and F. Schlegel exerted a powerful influence on Novalis, the latter initiating him in the greatness of Fichte and Goethe. Novalis was a true son of Romanticism, neither shunning its extravagances nor escaping its limitations. A curious compound was Novalis, bearing within himself threefold elements of optimism, pessimism, and romantic irony. Carlyle was pleased to style him "the most ideal of all Idealists," and Haym regarded his 'Hymns to Night' as different from anything that classical poetry in Germany has produced. They are interesting for their intermingling of sensuous pleasure with lofty spiritual rapture, but they are marked by a somewhat abnormal and not quite healthy condition of mind—a fact too often incidentally overlooked. Novalis, like a good Romanticist, held all poetry to be based on the fairy ideal; emphasised the need of living individuality in all poetry, and declared all the poet's delineations to

be symbolical and emotional. Philosophy was to him the hero of poetry : the philosopher was the centre, as being, for him, always omniscient : he would resolve, not philosophy alone, but all existence into poetry. He is mystical and elusive, but not lacking in beautiful thoughts. In his rarified atmosphere of philosophical abstraction, Novalis was often enough, in his prose writings at any rate, the victim of confused ideas and sophistical thought. Religion was, to Novalis, a thing of love and patriotism : he held it should be for us, as for the ancients, poetry : for him, it was man's re-discovery, after the Middle Age ideal, of the true, the inner world. The "blue flower" of Novalis was meant to symbolise the nameless longing of the poetic soul—such longing as could never be wholly satisfied. His mystical symbolism has not remained without traceable influence in subsequent literature, notably in poets like Lowell, Whittier, Emerson, and others. Friedrich Schlegel was the author of 'Lucinde,'—really a bloodless book, albeit it aimed to rehabilitate the flesh and its supposed rights. Important only as a Romanticist manifesto, it gave free play to the subjectivity, arbitrariness, lawlessness, that were to prove so characteristic of the Romantic movement. It says marvellously little for the state of German society at that time that a work so artistically weak, and so intrinsically wild and extravagant, should have made so great a stir. Its attack on marriage, and its

doctrine of free love, did not fail, however, to wake in Germany much righteous indignation. But, it should be remembered, he did more important work. A. W. Schlegel, the accomplished translator of Shakespeare, had a critical intellect, and was powerfully influenced by Fichte's teaching as to the unlimited powers of the mind to find everything in itself, itself in everything. He bewailed the decay of chivalry in the time. But on the Schlegels there is no need now to dwell. Even as to Schleiermacher, much as one may admire him as theologian—representative, as such, of the nineteenth century—there is not much to be said for the views put forward in his 'Letters' on Romantic issues. Otherwise, however, one must remember that Schleiermacher is hardly to be classed with typical Romanticism when his stress, as a disciple of Plato, on the fundamental significance of reason, and his ideal of morality in the 'Monologues,' are taken into account. His very Platonism took him beyond the Romantic lack of norm or measure. Still, he sounded the note of religious individuality, individuality being dominant in Romanticism. But, as to the 'Lucinde' letters, even Brandes, whom one takes to be a rather lax judge in these matters, much as one may admire him as literary critic, does not acquit Schleiermacher of lack of practical sagacity and insight. I should say much more. I have never ceased to regard his attitude as audaciously foolish, highly repre-

hensible from an ethical point of view, and the more repellent from its unctuous character. We pass on to say that the Romantic movement found philosophic focus and centre in Schelling, now, as then, somewhat unjustly regarded as romancer more than seriously constructive philosopher. The spirit of Romanticism was strongly evidenced in the blendings of poetry and science, philosophy and mythology, for long characteristic of Schelling, who stood between Fichte and Hegel. Unlike Fichte, whose preponderating interest was man, Schelling lays stress upon the world, carrying over into it his wavering subjectivity and his bold phantasy. The world was, to Fichte, the world as self-consciousness erects it; but the self which builds it is, to the Romanticists, the self of genius, of the constructive artist. The real world is the world which satisfies such geniuses. 'Tis this genial and creative individuality which is the Ideal of man, to Schelling, and not moral will or character, as with Fichte. The ethical idealism of Fichte had, as matter of fact, grown too severe for the Romanticists, and they preferred to interpret Nature idealistically in terms of bold sentiment and striking divination. -For Schelling, the greatest problem was the determination of the relationship between nature and mind, between the unconscious and the conscious. For Schelling, there was the same Absolute in nature as in mind, their harmony being no mere reflection of thought.

If you suppose we transfer our idea to nature, then, says Schelling, you have not even dreamed what nature is, and should be, for us. Nature is the counterpart of mind, and produced by it, only that mind may, by its agency, attain to self-consciousness or a pure perception of itself. Schelling derives largely from Spinoza, the net result not being Spinozan substance, but an inconceivable background of real being named the Absolute. Men of genius and artistic power are endowed, in Schelling's view, with a faculty of intellectual intuition, which discerns the identity of One with All. All things, quoth Schelling in his Romantic period, disembody into the ocean of Poesy. But he gets beyond the æsthetic train of Romanticism when he comes to deal with the ascent of nature-existences up to man, wherein he shows appreciation of evolution or development, not merely of romantic change. His emphasis on objective aspects and ethical bearings mark him off from typical Romanticism. Nature is, to Schelling, really the Absolute, whose revelation it is. The successive stages of phenomenal existence, from Nature's lowest forms up to the highest manifestations of life and thought, are set forth by means of Schelling's notable — and, it must be said, suggestive doctrine of potences. This Schellingian worship of the outer world of Nature found poetic expression in the realistic and objective representations of Goethe. But Novalis, the Schlegels, and the Romantics in

general, were averse to the spirit of Goethe in its marked classicism, greatly as they admired such works as 'Faust,' 'Hermann und Dorothea,' and 'Wilhelm Meister.' It will be our duty to note later the renewed and keen interest shown in recent years in such romantic thinkers as Novalis, Schlegel, Schleiermacher, and Schelling. The nearest approach to Schelling's philosophy of nature and transcendental idealism has been Hartmann's philosophy of the unconscious.

The great quadrilateral of Romantic graces may be said to consist of idleness, arbitrariness or lawlessness, enjoyment, and purposelessness. This last was, to the Romanticist, of the essence of genius. It is not forgotten, however, that some of the Romanticists, Tieck for example, were clearly aware of the danger lest their ideal should fail of efficiency in life and conduct, and they carried real and high purpose into life, amid much that was fantastic and cynical. But, for all that, emphasis on the subjective factors was characteristic of the Romanticists: in the foreground stands the subject—as knowing itself infinite—and not objective truth or knowledge. In all objectivity it is itself which the subject feels, and its feeling is a striving which is never satisfied. But the Romanticists have the abiding merit to have naturalised in Germany the great poets of all countries by their translations of Shakespeare, Ariosto, Calderon, Cervantes, Camoëns, &c., and to have acclimatised there

all manner of poetical forms. But they made the huge mistake of controverting, in militant modes, instead of being content with producing, and so introduced a disturbing element into the ideal sphere. Not all the brilliancy of the Romanticists has sufficed to make much of their work endure. This is due to their natures having been so artistic and aristocratic—however much one may believe in the aristocracy of intellect or the rights of intuitive genius—and so lacking in love of humanity in whole. One may strongly sympathise with the initial principle of the Romantic movement, as springing from individuality, but the principle took, in this case, too reactionary a form from the outset, and developed into a disordered individualism, with arbitrariness and lawlessness at its very core. These were the more easily rendered possible through ignorance of the laws of heredity and environment, or from lack of sense of social duty. The fact remains that Romanticism lacked objective measure, norm, or standard, and was swayed, in consequence, too much by impulse and emotion, ending in merely restless movement. Even in its religion, it is hard for Deity to get His due, so great is its stress on the infinity of the human subject—yea, on its Godhead also. Still, it is but fair to Romanticism to say that its stress on Individuality was, taken at its best, an attempt to find a place for the individual life, in our conception of the world as a reasoned whole; and, further, that its Individuality was not of an ex-

clusive and self-contained character, carrying as it did within itself a sense of infinitude, whereby it sought to transcend human personality and lose itself in the Divine universal consciousness. German Romantic literature was critical rather than creative: its Romanticism was more theoretic, thorough, and complete than English Romanticism, due to contemporaneous philosophical developments, in the manner already shown. As such, it powerfully influenced English Romanticism, though it must be remembered what inspiration it had earlier drawn, in Tieck and Goethe, from study of Shakespeare and the early English dramatists.

When we turn to British Romanticism, we find it, on both sides of the Tweed, emphasising individuality, whether in subject or in person or in nation, and dwelling on such elements as seemed rare, peculiar, marvellous, as being "romantic." British Romanticism had its beginnings in the cult of Spenser, the work of Gray, Macpherson's 'Ossian' (1760-63), and Percy's 'Reliques' (1765), Ossian's influence being especially felt over all Europe. British Romanticism was marked by the quality of its imagination, which so transmuted reality as to add strangeness to beauty. The British Romantics were not a compact group, like the Germans, with coherent aims. They include Coleridge, Wordsworth, Sir Walter Scott, Southey, Lamb, and such others as, associated with them, had departed from classical style and measured periods, and evinced

deep love of the Middle Ages. But Romanticism still amounted to a literary revolution here, though not so thorough, theoretic, or complete as the German one. This was the result of its being confined to the domain of art here, and not allied to any great philosophical development as in Germany, where the philosophical revolution from Kant to Hegel went hand in hand with the Romantic awakening. In Britain, its only philosophic depth and subtlety came through Coleridge. Romanticism was not here a movement, and did not found a school, as in Germany. Coleridge and Scott worked quite independently, and did not conspire together for a common end. Elements realistic, individualistic, homely, peculiar, fairy-like, fabulous,—these summed, as I have said, the British idea of Romanticism. Such Romanticism is writ large on such poems as “Christabel,” “Kubla Khan,” “Ballad of the Dark Ladye,” “Thalaba,” “Marmion,” “The Lady of the Lake,” and “The Lay of the Last Minstrel.” Sir Walter Scott did certainly not fail to share most fully in that freedom—some would say, licence—of form, and peculiarity of style and metre, that were so marked in Coleridge. Extravagant claims are sometimes put forward for Scott in a way which the true position and actual merits of Scott, and his inner relations and obligations to Coleridge, Schiller, Goethe, Bürger, and others, do not justify. The name of Fouqué, with his feudalistic cravings, would be more in order in the connection just named

than that of Goethe or of Schiller, so far as the kind of influence Scott exerted, is in question. Though it may be freely granted that Scott's influence came to be felt in every enlightened European country—in France how deeply we shall see—yet it must be owned that such supremacy as he attained was that of popularity (about the second and third decades of the nineteenth century), rather than of originality or sheer intellectual power. In these latter respects he must be ranked after Coleridge in the English Romantic movement; and, as for the intellectual poetico-philosophical movement known as Romanticism in Germany, it ought to need no saying that Scott's was not a mind that ever could have been at the head of it. This is by no means to deny Scott's greatness, but only to recognise relative justice. His greatness is seen in the splendid way he kept his head, alike amid all "lionisings" and in severe reverses of fortune; in his rare healthy-mindedness; and in the supreme influence he exercised on French Romanticism. Not as initiator, but as centre, focus, and culminator, of the Romantic movement, must we regard Scott. The impact he made upon the mind of Europe had no parallel: his fertility and creative genius gathered up all the lines of the Romantic Revival into his own personality. His name is, in these senses, the greatest in the whole Romantic movement. But we cannot claim intellectual headship for him over the whole Romantic movement, for

the reasons already adduced, and such others as, his too frequent flow of soul without feast of idea or reason; his diffused power but lack of intense passion; his defect in places of psychological skill in his portraitures; his poetical collapse before Byronic genius; his superb descriptive power unmarked by developmental advances of intellect; and the gross lack of care and quality attaching to much of his improvisation. His power of story-telling in verse was unrivalled, and his verse romances carry at times no small measure of epic stateliness and height, beyond their prevailing charm of romantic simplicity and glow. Scott's profusion of colour, and his great individualising power, are marked features of his poetry. 'Twas a fine, well-merited compliment Byron paid to Scott, when he called him "the Ariosto of the North," for Scott's appreciation of the Middle Ages was on their spectacular—particularly their military—side: it was the outer side of Mediævalism he appreciated: into its scholasticisms, its spiritualities, and its mysticisms, he penetrated but little. The only member of his group we can here notice is James Hogg, the "Ettrick Shepherd,"—an inferior kind of Scott, narrower in range. Fairy lore and popular superstition were his stock-in-trade; but he did not lack power and success as a ballad poet.

The member of the English Romantic School, who, by his very differences, proved the true complement of Coleridge, was Wordsworth. Together, they were

the transcendental teachers of the English movement. Nature and man were both essentially religious to Wordsworth, for he traced both to "the Soul of all the worlds." Wordsworth had the power to utter the mysterious divineness of instinct, as a "strength of feeling, great above all human estimate." Rarely in the world's history has so much originality of genius appeared as shone forth in Coleridge, the "noticeable man with large grey eyes," as Wordsworth described him. The romantic beauty, wealth of phantasy, dreamy and inconsequential thought-splendours, and, withal, the rich and sweet humanity of his work, all went to make Coleridge the exquisite poet he was—a "studious Poet eloquent of truth" glorified by imagination—the only thorough and genuine Romanticist in the English School. Such poets as Byron, Shelley, and Keats, are—if such a characterisation may be allowed—no more than classical members of the Romantic school, having caught something of its warmth of thought and feeling, but without giving up preferential choice for classic form and model. Such a poet as Shelley is Romantic only in the sense that he seemed determined to give expression to his own individuality so largely, in the manner that might be most suited to it. The influence of the Romanticists proper is often very traceable upon their work—both in style and matter—spite of certain antique or classical predilections. It should be said, however, that there is in them no felt opposition between

Hellenism and Romanticism. Hellenic themes—the mythology and legendary lore of Greece—were treated in ways so little Greek as to render them suitable for Romantic purposes. Campbell and Moore—despite his ‘Lalla Rookh’—were also marked by classic preferences. Cowper, Burns, and Crabbe had turned from sickly ideality altogether, and returned to a naturalism which reached its extreme development in the last-named poet. The two tendencies, the naturalistic and the romantic, had need of each other, and either of them fell into excess when working separately from the other. The Romantic Coleridge did not shut himself off from the healthy counteractive influence of Burns. Byron and Shelley were powerful and needed voices, albeit they had no need to outrage the moral sense of mankind. There is no more authentic poetic nature than Shelley, but it is scarcely true to say that he can teach us nothing, even though his poetry be so “empty of fact.”

Coleridge, “philosopher condemning wealth and death,” was the medium through which the Romantic philosophy of Germany was to find footing in England. A hard battle it had, for Bentham and James Mill were no insignificant forces to contend against. But the warfare of principles or tendencies was destined to be a far-reaching and quickening intellectual influence. Plato, Plotinus, Hartley, Berkeley, Spinoza, and Lessing, were among the philosophic minds that had chiefly influenced Coleridge, ere he, in the diffi-

culty of harmonising the human mind with external nature, turned to serious study of Kant. The result was, that Kant obtained such a mastery over Coleridge that he could no longer be just to others, not even to Herder. Coleridge, after Schiller, tried to bring Kantian criticism on art into line with that of the Romantic School. But, as his speculative activity grew, his creative force waned. Coleridge was a genuine Romanticist: his technique is of dreamy and unconscious character, but his dreams are of hardly less consequence than his waking reflections. Hence the elusive spirit of his finest verse. His Romantic contributions were few, but precious. Compared with Scott's romances in prose and verse, they are nothing for quantity. But they are exquisite in quality; the high-water mark of Romantic poetry is reached in his "Ancient Mariner," with its marvellous depictings of the life and beauty everywhere to be found: his "Christabel," though not so perfect or unique, is a more perfect fusion of natural and supernatural, and is a more purely mediæval poem. In these two poems alone, which display Coleridge's mastery of the supernatural, and bear the superscription of immortality, might be found a justification of Romanticism. They stand by themselves in English literature. Coleridge accepted the Kantian distinction between reason and understanding: he rejoiced in the Absolute, in which he found finite differences or oppositions blended

and obliterated: he loved intuition; he glorified imagination as the prerogative of genius; and he exalted synthesis. Like the German Romanticists, he sought a higher unity in which faith and reason should be harmonised. He exercised a great seminal influence on behalf of German speculative philosophy. His aim—very imperfectly realised—was to lay anew the foundations of spiritual philosophy; and his transcendentalism made him at least emancipator of the imagination. Jean Paul's æsthetic teachings strongly attracted Coleridge; from them he learned to distinguish between the power of conception, in a lower sense, as fancy, and in a higher, creative sense, as imagination; this distinction Coleridge made the foundation of his theory of beauty. Coleridge was also influenced by G. Maass, a German psychologist with high admiration for Kant, in the direction of setting genius over against, and high above, talent. Coleridge's philosophical training and influences left him less to appreciate in Scott and Southey, and more to glorify in Shakespeare. His glorification of Shakespeare was largely indebted to the influence of A. W. von Schlegel. Though he did not understand Schelling's system in whole, yet he introduced to English literature the Schellingian worship of external nature, and mystical absorption in it. Coleridge's philosophy of the beautiful owes much to Schelling's 'Transcendental Ideality.' A time came, however, when this "true sovereign of English

thought"—as Julius Hare styled Coleridge—underwent a certain reaction against both Kant and Schelling. The real secret of the influence wielded by Coleridge lay in his interpretation of spiritual life and experience, and neither in his transcendentalism nor his metaphysical interests. We are always glad when he lays aside the metaphysician and becomes the poet, which is seldomer than could be wished. Eclectic as he was, he pursued his search for truth to life's end. Such a figure—whose imagination was said to have angelic wings and feed on manna—wakes keen regret that lack of healthy volition and commanding will-power robbed him of such massive achievement and sublime performance as can only be faintly imagined. Carlyle was justly impatient of Coleridge's lack of aim and energy, but his was a mind of finer edge than that of Carlyle. Nemesis followed the overstrained imagination of the brilliantly talking and wildly dreaming Coleridge, although his sensitive tenderness of nature had much to do with his unfortunate irresoluteness. His was, as Southey said, "a waste of unequalled power," his mind being "external activity without action." But yet the Romantic movement did not fail of one great result, to wit, it held men to lofty ideals in a time when the effects of the French Revolution threw men back on the need of first principles, and when the spirit of scientific discovery might have swept their minds into the abyss of Materialism. Carlyle, the

prophet of power, turned to a different side of German thought than that which arrested Coleridge, the prophet of fancy. Kant and Fichte hold Carlyle, not merely Goethe and Schiller. From Goethe Coleridge turned with aversion as from a heathen. Kantian truth is held by Carlyle in Romanticist spirit. Coleridge and Carlyle are alike in their opposition to shallow Enlightenment and narrow-minded Materialism. But though Coleridge had derived much of his wealth from German thought, it is to Carlyle that the peculiar merit, of course, attaches, to have been the first to make German thought and literature a living force in Britain. Carlyle's Romanticism comes out strikingly in his emphasis on the inexplicable and spontaneous element to be found in great personalities.

The belated movement—for it was twenty or thirty years behind that of Germany and England—known as French Romanticism was, unlike German and English Romanticism, noted for the suddenness of its strength: no gradual development marked its outbreak. France had been the fountainhead of Classicism—say rather, the pseudo-classicism of Corneille, Racine, and Voltaire; hence the special task of Romanticism here, in causing a break with native literary tradition, was greater than in Germany or England. French Romanticism, like German, and unlike British, Romanticism, founded a school, with Hugo as its leader. Its earliest form took the shape

of a defence of local colouring in literature, even when reviving dead ages, besides the revolt against Classicism just alluded to. The attempts, in the reigns of Louis XIV. and Louis XV., to set up classic taste in poetry, fell short because the principles of classic art were not seized, but only a presentation made of Greek art in the codified forms of Aristotle. Romanticism in France was a fight for freedom and originality, but it was confined to the domain of art, as in England, and did not wander into politics and religion, as in Germany. Of the French Romanticists of 1830, there were some who regarded André Chénier as their precursor — a very mistaken judgment, for Chénier is not at all really Romanticist. His influence was of an Hellenic character, and impressed itself strongly upon Hugo. Though Romanticism took, as I have earlier said, disordered forms of individualism, yet it was, no doubt, meant as a fuller expression of individuality: such individuality or personality is a dominant note of French Romanticism: nowhere, therefore, is Romantic literature more shot through with personal emotion; here, too, lyricism was its keynote. Of the three great poets — Lamartine, Hugo, and De Vigny — the first is the most pure and idealistic, the second the most precise and realistic, and the third the most elegant and philosophic. De Vigny pursues the Ideal: his sublime sadnesses bear the stamp of sincerity: he is great in his thought, virile in his expression, even

when he has allowed himself to be dominated by doubt. Characteristically, all three found their inspiration within, and were marked by the Romantic love of freedom, vigour, colour, movement, and novelty. When Lamartine issued in 1820 his '*Méditations*,' the Romantic movement was being helped in initial, non-aggressive form. But Lamartine lacked Hugo's energy and fire, as the fastidious De Vigny lacked Hugo's qualities of leadership.

French tragedy of idealistic character and pseudo-classic tendency is what Hugo began by attacking. But the attack was not what it would have been, had Hugo been more of a thinker, without being less of a poet. He makes a kind of naturalistic protest against pure beauty being taken as sole, or even supreme, subject of art. He puts forward a plea for the æsthetic value of the ugly, with its manifoldness of form and type. George Sand, Beyle, Mérimée, Balzac, and others, in their own ways, followed Hugo's lead in this naturalistic march. The dualistic character of this form of Romanticism is seen in its forcing of extremes, and setting of opposites side by side—a fondness for antitheses innate in Hugo—a dualistic tendency derived from the old mediæval supposition of conflict between body and soul. Hugo's commanding genius put him at the head of the Romantic movement in France, and he gave it its direction. With him a new and grandiose rhetoric was born, full of form and colour. The

Romantic revolt was itself of a kind to show the strength of the classical tradition. Whereas German Romanticism, under Tieck and Novalis, sought to recover its lost ideal by turning wistfully to the Middle Ages, French Romanticism, under Hugo's leadership, sought to re-create the world under vision and faculty divine that were its own. It maintained a bright and daylight sense of things that favourably contrasted with the moonshiny mysticism of the German Romanticists. French Romanticism takes its own type and form, as seen in the sentimentalised Christianity of — say, Chateaubriand's 'Génie du Christianisme,' and 'Les Martyrs.' In Hugo, so-called sovereign of the nineteenth century, the Romantic interest is a living thing. He defined Romanticism as Liberalism in literature. French Romanticism was artistic and social, not philosophical, as in Germany. Hugo held literary liberty to be the child of political liberty—liberty in the former case asserted against the oppressive weight of Classicism. This individual liberty was not always free of extravagances, and Hugo himself was too much at the mercy of his environment. His philosophy of life took, in consequence, a too Parisian cast. Hugo's earlier poetry was finely descriptive—a certain earnestness mingling with it—but the thought was neither subtle nor strong. His treatment of Nature leaves much to be desired: he is too fond of the lugubrious, the bizarre, and the

fantastic. His philosophic moods were not untinged with sadness, as seen, for example, in his 'Autumn Leaves' ('Feuilles d'Automne'). Sombre as his philosophy of life at times appears, it is yet no philosophy of despair. Indeed, his optimism seems always to come out radiant and serene, but it is needful to remember how much good fortune and success have had to do with that. He was far too completely the son of his age, allowing the spirit of the time too entirely to shape his virtues, and imprint on him its features. Senses there were, however, in which Hugo was praiser of the past—*laudator temporis acti*. His power of handling ideas in the abstract was small: his genius does not shine in capacity for organised thought. His thought, however, has foundations, though capable enough critics have not been wanting who would regard anything of the nature of a religious philosophy in Hugo as out of the question. True, it has to be gathered up in fragments, but the fragments are always interesting. Hugo makes the ideal concrete, as Lamartine liquefies the real. When Hugo stands in the presence of Nature, it is not as before something lifeless and godless. He has, in some sort, a cosmic philosophy, whose elements are rather ill-defined, but seem to form one vast natural-supernatural whole in a way that recalls Carlyle's modes of conception. At base of Hugo's thought seems to be what we may paradoxically term a vast and vague spiritualistic

naturalism: a *naturalism*, because it would pierce beneath all artificialities and conventionalisms, that, in its love of actuality, it might come upon the truth of nature itself; a *spiritualistic* naturalism, because it is far from being unlighted with spiritual elements, which are, in fact, shot through the consciousness alike of the race and the individual. Hugo little dreamed of his own incapacity for handling problems of religion and philosophy; hence the almost boundless self-absorption, or, as one has styled it, "auto-theism" of the poet, which shows itself in a spirit that does not shrink from setting itself above the wisdom of the Highest. God seems often as welcome to Hugo for a name with which to embellish his verses, as He is for the soul of all things. But Hugo is never at his best until he has come down—though the descents are sometimes too great—from his pontificate of the infinite, and has ceased to be so prophetic and infallible. There is no need to deny Hugo a true belief in God, because his God-conceptions are not of the most luminous order. Is luminosity the first thing to be expected in a God-intoxicated poet? Yet Hugo was able on occasion to say that there are no occult forces, and that luminous force means God. To Hugo's bitterly satirical spirit, God is sometimes no more than a Being Who "dotingly" repeats Himself—One to Whom, we feel, Hugo could have given felicitous suggestions for the making of a new type of man, eclipsing in

interest and variety the old. Need it be said that this God was born only of the poet's *phantasy*? That is just Hugo's mistake: he will play the rôle of a great revealer, instead of the simpler, more human, more fitting part of a poet, who charms and inspires, leaving the revelations of God to a Dante. Hugo at times makes the Infinite appear as no more than a vague, undefinable Force, in his impatience at men's attempts to enclose the Absolute in the compass of their petty human formulas. A frequent notion of his is that of the "gulf" which separates infinite truths from our finite conceptions and expressions of them. Says Hugo—

"Expect not from the gulf (*gouffre*)
Where the ages lose themselves,
Expect not from the grand whole, untameable and bound-
less,
Where the invisible floats, where in the obscurity
The wing of the whirlwinds hurtles with the wing of the
eagles,
An explanation of God in full form."

Hugo declares to men that it is even true of their little systems that there is "no religion but blasphemes a little." His Romanticism leads him to make his religion, like his poetic art, of his own age and country. But vague ideas of spiritual emancipation do obviously not suffice to constitute a full and strong religion. There is, however, a fine feeling for the ethical in many of the lyrics of this poet

of conscience, if we may so term him. His moral idealism was able to see in the French Revolution "nothing else than the ideal bearing the sword." What frequent and formidable insights he gives us into the religion of remorse, as seen, say, in the workings of such a conscience as that of Jean Valjean! 'Tis Hugo who has insisted that nothing can be found for us more mysterious or infinite than these workings of conscience. Such interior working of the soul offers to Hugo a grander spectacle than does sea or sky. For him it is God who upheaves the remorseful soul as well as the ocean. Hugo's Romantic idealism was wayward: it trusted to feeling and bold divination rather than to moral law; it lacked objectivity of standard; it pitched its ideals too high for humanity; and it came short in moral healthiness and robust vigour.

But it is the merit of Hugo to carry us into regions of unknown sublimities until—whether in the body or out of the body, we cannot tell—we are attracted, inspired, and stimulated by his potent ethical idealism. The idealism is every whit as true as the intense personal realism that marks his work. The great problem, for Hugo, is to restore to the human mind something of the ideal. It is precisely to this summit—namely, the ideal—that God descends and man rises. He enforced the ideal as the stable type of ever-moving progress. It was, in fact, the superabundance of his idealism that often helped betray

Hugo into a perfectly inexcusable carelessness of the historically true and the scientifically exact. His results were reached in a rush of intuitions and instinctive impressions. If it be said he takes the kingdom of heaven by violence, then we cannot help remembering that the kingdoms so taken are of earth rather than of heaven, and even of earth's kingdoms not the highest. Hugo lacks, as we have hinted, the reflective power which, in a Goethe, makes us hold poetry dear: we grow weary of his torrential verbiage and rhetorical magnificence. He has an incurable fondness for superlatives: his love of excess blinds his sense of proportion, and renders obscure his feeling for taste and measure; but there is no denying the power of pathos in this "lord of human tears," as Tennyson called him. "Hernani," the drama which made Hugo famous, through the frantic devotion of his followers, was a Spanish subject, breathing, in its ethical aspects, the spirit of Calderon. Appearing in 1830, its mission was to overthrow what the Romanticists regarded as the false classic tragedy of Corneille. A drama it was, indeed, characteristic of the Romanticism of the day, marked by power and independence, also by extravagance and imperfection. Often forced and artificial, it is also frequently unhistorical and unnatural. In spirit and essence it yet reflected the life of the Europe of its time. Hugo's 'Les Orientales,' with Orientalism that has been questioned, formed a superb work of literary

art, and set the style of Romantic lyric poetry. His 'Legend of the Ages' ('*Légende des Siècles*') afforded full scope to Hugo's fancy and imagination with striking and superb result. Its brief epics were products of tremendous vigour, ambition, and energy, whereas 'Les Contemplations' were a mild and quiet accumulation. In these latter Hugo said—

"If but the way be straight,
It cannot be amiss : before me lies
Dawn and the day ; the night behind me ; that
Suffices me ; I break the bounds ; I *see*,
And nothing more ; *believe*, and nothing less ;
My future is not one of my concerns."

But we cannot now particularise as to works.

The Romanticists were romantic in their lives no less than with their lips—nowhere more so than in France. Hence such phenomena as the obviously grotesque and strongly repellent relations of Hugo and Madame Drouet ; the lurking pride in the relations of Balzac to Madame Hanska ; the hidden ecstasies of love in Musset ; and the scarcely overt bitterness of love in Vigny. Turn we now to some of the lesser lights in French Romanticism. There is Prosper Mérimée, aggressive, satirical, force-worshipping, who became the very type of disillusion. Impersonality in literary art was his aim—in which he was, to a high degree, successful. This marked self-effacement has much to do with the beauty of his literary style, which is simple, exquisite, and

impeccably correct. But it also has to do with its defects in qualities of soul or subjective colouring. In spirit he is ironical, cold, tragical, unsparing; hence his interest in the Romantic movement was not lasting, through his distrust, apparently, of its exaggerations. Alfred de Musset early joined the *Cénacle*, or inner circle of the French Romanticists, and his native genius soon made him famous, as his essential humanity made him attractive. His marked dramatic instincts led him to produce remarkable works, in which the results, perfect in their artistic kind, were achieved with wonderful absence of formal process or effort. He has plenty of subjectiveness, with no lack of passion, grace, vigour, melody. His individuality is, however, rather pretentious, and not always of quite the most reputable character. For he was too much child of his age, which knew not how to give him true strength amid human sorrow and suffering. Then there is Balzac, whose genius was summed by a great French critic as massive and materialistic. If insufficiency of thought constituted a possible danger of Hugo's work, that of Balzac was menaced, as result of scientific encroachments, by the danger of insufficiency of style. Balzac is now realistic, and now imaginative, just as the need or call may be, but is never without the fecundity of genius. He has an extraordinary imagination, and, as a literary phenomenon, is astonishing in his incompleteness. Bal-

zac had too much hold on Naturalism to be really Romantic, and indeed gave himself up to psychological study or analysis of temperament. Still, he was never so fortunate as when his themes were fantastic and unreal, and awaited his power to invest them with reality. His powers of psychologic observation and thought were intense. His view of life was marked by directness, penetration, and veracity, but in taste and moral sense he was lacking. George Sand had great facility in improvisation, and in catching up currents of popular thought and sentiment. She knew no lack of fertility and imaginative power. Dumas, the elder, while not possessing the literary powers of Hugo, was yet as revolutionary in style and general characteristics as Hugo. He was at once most prolific and most powerful as a writer of dramatic and historical romances. Indeed, the productivity of the period, as seen in the works of, say, Hugo, Balzac, Dumas, and George Sand, was prodigious. Saint-Beuve, in his earlier writings, lacked critical balance; but his later work, penetrated by his moderation, balance, and delicacy, was perfect in knowledge and treatment of French genius. To its criticism he brought his powers of subtle analysis and refined taste, and he put at the service of the Romantic movement his great erudition. He has Romantic subjectiveness, and his poetry takes a very personal cast. His was the merit, as founder of modern criticism, to base this latter on no mere set

of critical rules, but on wide study of literature itself. His method had the fault, however—due to his application of the positivistic method to criticism—of devoting less attention, at times, to writings themselves, than to the personal history of authors. Théophile Gautier and his disciples are marked by hate of the modern world, not altogether unlike the pessimism of Schopenhauer. But Gautier wrote enthusiastically of the Romantic movement, wherein “we were mad with lyric ardour and art.” Gautier is master of the ornate style of writing, which he reserved rather exclusively for æsthetic themes. Strongly influenced by Hugonic Romanticism, Gautier was yet very percipient and appreciative of the impersonal phase of literary art. Flaubert was child of the French Romanticism of 1830, his work being shot through with influences derived from Hugo, Musset, Balzac, Dumas, Saint-Beuve, and Gautier. The dangers, contradictions, extravagances of the Romantic ideal are certainly not wanting to Flaubert. Yet he realised a noble practical idealism, which sometimes, however, appears rather as a learned realism. He is a fervid proclaimer of art for art’s sake, of the doctrine of impersonality, or the complete objectivity of the work, whereby the artist no more appears in his work than God does in nature. God is, in His universe, present everywhere, yet visible nowhere. So must the artist be in his work. His issue of ‘*Madame Bovary*’ was a capital event

in French Romanticism, because he had blended the plastic force of Hugo and Gautier with the analytic lucidity of Balzac and Stendhal. He loved to rouse the imagination, and could remain impassible and serene in the midst of voluptuous descriptions. 'Twas the strange, unsought, and unexpected union in him of the two forces of the time, Romanticism and Science—for he had great erudition and was a master of historical science—that made him the intellectual triumph he was. The influence of Romanticism on historical development has been already noticed, but it should be remarked how transforming was its influence on history in France—an influence whereby the historic imagination was greatly quickened and historic sympathy widened.

It remains to be said that the Romantic School eventually rose to dominance in French Art, under leadership of Delacroix, a thorough-going Romanticist—"the Hugo of paint," as he has been called—Scheffer, Vernet, Delaroche, and Ingres. Their power was especially shown in depicting emotions drawn from present and actual life, and in the effectiveness of their colouring.

The importance of Spanish romance, in its influence on the Romantic movement, is too great to be overlooked. Romance was, from earliest times, the species of poetry most agreeable to the Spanish character. We have no call to go back upon the ancient Castilian romances, or even upon the *Romancero general*

(general romance book) of later times. We may, however, note that only at the middle of the fifteenth century did literature become more than an exotic in Spain. The dramatic way was led in Europe when, towards the close of that century, so far as has been ascertained, the famous 'Celestina,' or 'Tragi-Comedy of Calixto and Melibea,' took form, and paved the path, by its heroic types and grace of diction, for the work of Cervantes — who calls it a "divine book" — and Lope de Vega. The romance work of Cervantes, with his world-famous romance of 'Don Quixote,' which England, happily, of non-Spanish nations, was the first to appreciate; the amazing fertility of his romance rival, Lope de Vega, who praised the romances as Iliads without a Homer; and the romantic genius of Calderon, which enabled him to improve on those who had gone before him, and mightily to influence those who came after him, — these are factors too important not to deserve some specific, even if not extended, treatment. The power of Cervantes lay in his being not only able at will to withdraw into the charmed world of his imagination, but also in his peerless power to set forth what was picturesque in the sordid scenes around him. Realistic he is, without ever falling into the faults of latter-day realism. Spanish influence is strongly impressed on the literary work of Corneille, his 'Cid' being Spanish in spirit; and Corneille lives again in Hugo, who is deeply imbued with the spirit of Spain, where in

early life he had been. Nor is it to be overlooked how greatly Mérimée was moulded by Spanish style and spirit—an influence from which De Musset himself was not exempt. Then, again, in German Romanticism we find Eichendorff making important translations of some of Calderon's 'Autos Sacramentales.' But the Schlegels greatly extolled Calderon—Friedrich exalting him above Shakespeare—because the Middle Ages had put their stamp on Calderon's work. In our own country, Lockhart had great success in his 'Spanish Ballads,' published in 1834. Sir John Bowring's work on 'Ancient Poetry and Romance of Spain' was another reflection of Spanish influence. In these connections it should be remembered that Spain had a larger body of popular ballad or romance poetry, reaching back to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, with the *redondilla* as its measure, than either Germany or England. Small wonder, therefore, that the Romantic movement at length found place in Spain. This it did, by way of French Romanticism, in the dramas of Martinez de la Rosa and Duke de Rivas, the "Don Alvaro" of the latter proving in 1835 quite an event in the history of modern Spanish literature.

As for Romanticism in Italy, there is no need to go back upon Boccaccio, who, among earlier Italian writers, did much for Romantic interest. He drew on the French romances, be it only said, giving his own character to mediæval forms. At a time when

the danger of too much classic pedantry, formalism, and imitation, was great, Boccaccio set his face against the precisians. His romance work was far from being confined to the 'Decameron,' which was, in fact, less followed than some of his other works. His romantic and epic verse had a determining influence upon our own Chaucer, as it also had a salutary influence on the future of Italian poetry, which it saved from the blight of false Classicism. It must suffice to say that Italy had its own Romantic movement, headed by Berchet, under Madame de Staël's influence. In the movement the famous Pellico early figured. Manzoni began, like Sir Walter Scott, with translations from Bürger, though he lacked Scott's range and power. Like the German Schlegel, and the French Hugo, Manzoni went on to attack Classicism in his 'Discourse of the Three Unities.' But Manzoni was no extreme Romanticist; he had too much balance, reasonableness, and self-restraint for that. Manzoni's 'I Promessi Sposi' has been as popular in Europe as if it had been an historical romance by Sir Walter Scott himself. Even Leopardi, so often taken as the champion of Classicism, was largely Romantic in temperament, as may be seen in his fondness for the moon, his melancholy, his individualism, and his pessimism. The Romanticism of Italy, however, soon became infected with mysticism and sickly sentimentality — degenerated, indeed, into a mannerism. Among the Romantic School in Italy were Grossi and

d'Azeglio and others, who followed Manzoni. An ardent Romanticist, who did not so follow, was Guerrazzi, to whom Romanticism was the sun, and Classicism only the moon. Among the later Italian Romanticists was Prati, whose work Carducci highly praised, and who became increasingly classical. But, in truth, Romanticism always remained somewhat of an alien to Italian genius, although it rendered a lasting service to Italian literature by freeing it from the tyranny of form, and reminding it of the close, indissoluble connection between matter and form in works of artistic genius.

Danish Romanticism built upon German foundations, or it worked out trends of thought supplied by Scandinavian legends and mythology. With less life and intellect than the German authors, the Danish Romanticists had more art and lucidity. Oehlenschläger, Hauch, and the æsthetic J. C. Heiberg, lose nothing by comparison with Tieck, Novalis, and Fr. Schlegel in point of form, but they come short in respect of vitality and substance. Reckoning must be made, however, of their indebtedness to the Germans, without whose inspirations many of their best products had never been. Oehlenschläger the original, and Heiberg the elegant, are conspicuous examples in relation to Tieck; Andersen—softest and sweetest of Danish Romanticists—in relation to Hoffmann and Heine; Ingemann to Fouqué and Hoffmann; and Hauch to Novalis. More sanity, balance, harmony, may be claimed for

the Danish productions, which, however, lacked the boldness of German genius. The complexity of the relation between the German and the Danish forms of Romanticism is conspicuous. The philosopher of Danish Romanticism was Sören Kierkegaard, religiously orthodox, and in thought advanced beyond Romanticism, to which, in matters of style especially, he is still connected. Like a good Romanticist, he is enamoured of *wish*—always so dear to the heart of Romanticism. Kierkegaard gives systematic expression to Romantic apotheosis of idleness, the indolence of genius, which, in its pure passivity, was supposed to lead to inspiration and enjoyment. The Romanticist glorification of purposelessness—"futile teleology"—was also shared by Kierkegaard. Oehlenschläger's work is marked by great fineness and intelligence. He, no more than Tieck, hesitates to mingle different styles of poetry, doing so with a success that Hauch did not attain. The genius of Oehlenschläger revolutionised the poetic literatures of the North: he led these peoples back to the springs of their own legendary lore, himself making effective use of the sagas of Iceland. Heiberg on occasion makes Romantic use of the idea of previous existence, and, in his plays, displays wit, satire, and the power of parody. His is the distinction to have outshone his compeers in making deep, real use of life's experience, and in evidencing something like a philosophy with scientific basis. But, like a true Romanticist,

he viewed the philistinism of the time as something final, and was prone to set over against it infinite longing rather than manly will. Ingemann approximated more nearly, in certain parts of his work, than any Danish Romanticist to Novalis, whose work and spirit at such times inspired him. Andersen invests the story of his life with poetic worth and interest so great as to rival the most entrancing autobiographic records. His innocence, his candour, his power of self-revelation, are remarkable, and invest his fairy tales with beautiful and romantic interest. A subtle charm and unsuspected beauty mark his work. Fouqué was among the German Romanticists whom he imitated, his 'Little Mermaid' following 'Undine.' Andersen is the concentrated essence of the sweetness and innocence of Danish Romanticism, with, however, sad lack of will power, virility, depth, and independence of human laudation. The Danish writer, Shack Staffeldt, was German born, and voiced Romantic longing in particular degree. He, like Novalis, turned aside from the world of outward reality. Among the later Danish Romanticists were H. F. Ewald, a successful but not very powerful follower of Ingemann; W. Bergsoë, who lacked not in romantic and descriptive power; and M. A. Goldschmidt, a somewhat prolix but able writer.

Scandinavian Romanticism, with its mild enthusiasms, took its colouring from that of Germany. In principles essentially one with the German Ro-

manticists, the Romanticists of Sweden—known as “the Phosphorists” or the “New School”—made an onset, as was to be expected, on French literary taste, as represented by the Swedish Academy, which was in its predilections French. Atterbom, Hammaršköld, and Palmblad were united in founding the “Aurora Society” (1807). While Swedish Romanticism had, of course, national characteristics, yet German influence was very marked. P. A. Atterbom, the leader of the Phosphorists, bears a likeness to Tieck, for example, as Stagnelius does to Novalis. Atterbom did not fail to repel the objections of Esaias Tegnér—a powerful Swedish poet deeply tinged with Hellenism—to the sombre and melancholic views of the Swedish Romanticists, which were not without their justification in reason and good sense. No doubt, Tegnér himself was, on occasion, infected with Romanticism of the Byronic type, but he steadfastly, for all that, opposed the Phosphorists, and discomfited them. His Hellenism, tinged as it was with Byronic Romanticism, exerted a wholesome influence on the Romanticists of Sweden, who were prone to make much that was confused and immature pass for profound. In fact, Tegnér’s brilliancy and lucidity carried his influence on to its being that of the national poet of Sweden, albeit foreign influences are clearly discernible in his work. His philosophy of life, however, was assailed by Atterbom, leader of the Swedish Roman-

ticists, as wanting in depth, because of its inadequate recognition of the facts of sin and sorrow. Not without reason, but the lack was temperamental.

Norway did not escape being touched by Romanticism, as displayed by Andreas Munch. Nor can the impulse supplied by Romanticism be overlooked in the tales, romances, and dramas of Björnson, whose poetry pre-eminently voiced the national genius. To mention his name, it has been felicitously said, is like running up the flag of Norway. And, so doing, he accomplished what the well-meaning and self-sacrificing, but not greatly understanding, Wergeland failed to do. In what he did the influence of Oehlenschläger was not wanting, and indeed the effects of Danish Romanticism are traceable in Björnson's perpetual insistences on primitive feeling, simplicity, and childlike apprehension or vision of the world. But the eloquent Björnson is a prophet who has turned to such excellent account the vigour and self-assertion of the old Norse sagas, as to have made himself the very embodiment of the national genius. The romances of Jonas Lie are strong in power of objectivisation, or appreciation of the material beauty of form, but suffer through his having in him nothing of the philosopher. He diverges from Romanticism in his power to see poetry in the actual and contemporary.

Romanticism found its way into the Netherlands,

in the first half of the nineteenth century, through Jacob van Lennep, who was influenced by Scott and Byron. By his treatment of native tales and historic themes, in narrative poems, Van Lennep effectively repressed French Classicism; his influence was extended by his novels, with style popular yet refined. He did not lack followers, such as A. Bogaers, H. A. Meyer, and others.

Russia carries not a little of Romantic interest, albeit Romanticism is foreign to the spirit of Russian Realism. It must not be overlooked how different were the causes of Romanticism in Russia from those of other great European nations, inasmuch as, having had no Middle Ages of her own to fall back upon, her Romantic materials had to be borrowed or derived from other nations. Nor must it be forgotten that the real founder of Russian literature, Lermontsoff, with his school, had given themselves over to French Classicism. Romanticism found an entrance—a too conventional one—in Ozeroff, and the Romantic tendencies of Karamsin and Orloff must also be remarked. The Romantic successor of Karamsin was Jukovsky, who translated many pieces from the Romantic poets of Germany, and gave the first impulse towards study of the spirit of Goethe and Schiller. His Romanticism was, however, highly charged with the sense of reality, and, in infusing the Romantic spirit into Russian poetry, he kept it largely but not wholly free from mechanicalism

and unreality or false idealism. In this way he steered clear of the visionary and fantastic tendencies of certain German Romanticists. A Romantic character is so stamped upon his work as to render it less varied and full than it would otherwise have been. As it was, Gogol praised it as like "the vaguely beautiful notes of an *Æolian* harp." Romanticism left its mark also on Gogol, the founder of the great school of Russian Realism, despite his work being so deeply saturated with the Russian spirit. Gogol lacks neither humour nor moral strength. Byronic spirit was imported by the passionate Pushkin and the fiery Lermontoff. Pushkin was a Romanticist for a time at least, but he soon emancipated himself from the sceptical and subjective spirit of Byron, and came under the broader and healthier influence of Shakespeare. Pushkin emancipated himself also from the trammels of foreign thought, and imparted to Russian literature an actuality and a distinctiveness all its own. Pushkin notwithstanding, Arnold felt able solemnly to aver that the Russians have not yet had a great poet!

In Poland, the Romanticist Slowacki used Slavonic myth and legend with intuitive and mystical power. The romances of Sienkiewicz, it may be added, owed not a little to the influence of the Russian Gogol.

It must not for a moment be forgotten how little Romanticism is a thing of mere historical or remote

interest, for the poetry of the nineteenth century was, for the greater part, Romantic in the wider acceptation of the term. This is seen, for example, in its emotionalism, its picturesqueness, its return to nature, its love of the mysterious and the distant, its subjectivity, its intrusion of the ego, or its assertion of the individual personality, and so forth. If, for instance, we take writers like Carlyle and Ruskin, they are both Romanticists—the former in his warfare against Bentham and utilitarianism, and in his stress, already noticed, on the inexplicable in great personalities; the latter in his praise of mediæval art, and in his breach with academic traditions in preferring to send artists to nature. To speak of no other elements or aspects in Tennyson, his ‘*Idylls of the King*’ is a work in contents thoroughly romantic, though classical in form. Tennyson has a way of so modernising his stories of the Middle Ages that the peculiar charm or flavour of the Middle Ages is lost. Browning is occasionally Romantic by implication in his titles, but is often mediæval without being really Romantic. Mrs Browning frequently indulges in ballad romance, not always with conspicuous success. But William Morris and D. G. Rossetti were steeped in Mediævalism, while Swinburne also experimented in Mediævalism. Both Dickens and Stevenson belonged to the Romantic rearguard.

It was the peculiar function of Romanticism to quicken the historic sense, and its great achievement

has therefore been the creation of historical science, lying alongside the natural sciences. In the Europe of to-day the Neo-Romantic trend is too striking a feature of the age to be overlooked. Romanticism lives again to-day, as the works of Haym, Dilthey, Huch, Joel, and others sufficiently prove. Its spirit evidences itself in present-day impressionism, psychologism, and subjectivism; in current tendencies to sit loosely to intellectualism, metaphysicism, and objectivism; and in the disposition to deal with personality and its experiences, without troubling to trace out trains of objective historical connections. In the foreground of the Neo-Romantic movement stands revived religious interest, related to the universe through mystic feeling, but æsthetic and literary interests are not far off. Neo-Romanticism, under the banner of Schelling, to-day stands for the religious consciousness, but will have no ecclesiastical dogmas. Now that the triumph of Schelling and Novalis has come, the Neo-Romanticists seek a way from æsthetic to philosophical feeling, so that art and philosophy shall interpenetrate each other and form a harmonious whole. Schelling it was who had given to this idea of harmonious development scientific form or expression in his philosophy of Identity. Schelling, as philosopher of art, as artist among philosophers, and as mystic among dialecticians, can no more be denied paramount place in that Neo-Romantic thought which has assumed gigantic proportions in the Germany of to-day.

Edwin Kircher, Leopold Ziegler, Heinrich Simon, and Theodor Lessing are among those who have greatly helped this Neo-Romantic trend of thought and feeling. But the late ideal centre of the Neo-Romantic movement is Richard Wagner, at once artist and thinker. For a Romantic the poet of "Parsifal" certainly was, who found his way by paths, high and untrodden, back to the shrine of the Middle Ages. 'Tis with his poetic and philosophic sides we are here concerned, too often still overlooked. The influence of Nietzsche, also antagonistic in many respects to Romanticism, is of a Romantic character. 'Tis a Romantic subjectivity which carries him beyond religion ; his Romanticism is of a naturalistic character, going back to natural instinct, and taking an æsthetic rather than an ethical form or direction. Nietzsche's naturalistic mode of thought shows itself in a practical manner, life meaning for him the will to power ; and his Romanticism is of an order which is quite prepared to make all theoretic interests subservient to practical power. 'Tis thus life-impulse which his Romanticism emphasises, rather than feeling and phantasy, and it does so with no lack of Romantic irony. Nietzsche makes the philosopher the organ of the will to power, for the philosopher is a creative genius whose personality is everything. The Neo-Romantic movement has, no doubt, not a little in it that is absurd and fantastical, but it has yet rendered great services, as, for example, in widening

philosophical problems, enriching philosophical possibilities, and asserting the differentiating power of the individual soul against dead-level naturalism. In France, where the Romantic movement has long ceased to be a living force, the movement to-day calling itself naturalism or realism has sought a certain justification for itself in the fact that the Romantic movement was so personal, lyrical, and limited in range and interest.

CHAPTER IV.

EPIC AND LYRIC POETRY.

A GENEROUS licence, in the mode of living, is allowed by Milton to the lyric poet, but water and a wooden bowl are all he can afford the epic poet—singer of the gods and their descent unto men. No doubt, lyric poetry is, in essence, the expression of individual passion, and, as such, cannot quench love as supreme passion. Only in Alexandrian and later Greek literature did love enter as a main interest or motive into the epic. But in poetry itself, the dividing line between epic and lyric is often dimly drawn, and an epical lyric, as well as a lyrical epic, can be warrantably used of certain compositions. Not even the quaint stateliness of Spenser's epic poetry can hide the lyric spirit that pervades much of it. But, indeed, the epic sums in itself all poetry—not merely epic, but dramatic, idyllic, and elegiac elements as well. For the epic is the most comprehensive of all kinds of poetry. It is inclusive of the romance, as Tasso very clearly perceived. For the romantic epic

not a little was done by the Italian poet Berni, but the epic of romance owed vastly more to the genius of Ariosto. But even more of epic stateliness and dignity reside in Tasso's verse than may be found in Ariosto. Of literary interest is the epic of "Pentaour," on the achievements of Ramses II., as being the only epic in ancient Egyptian literature. In the *Odyssey* of Homer we find the epic, with its developing technique, become the most romantic of all poetry. For it has all experience for its province. With calmness and self-possession the epic poet represents his past events as action in progress, so differing from the dramatic poet, who imports immediacy and vehemence into his representation of events as real and present. The dramatic poet cannot afford to carry the equanimity of the epic poet, as Calderon and Shakespeare exemplify.

And yet, to do lyrical poetry justice, it must be said that lyric verse ranges from the deepest to the highest in a way that gives it a width of feeling and expression scarcely open to the epic. Besides which, the epic, deep and smooth in its strength, can hardly, in its historic and descriptive character, be so realistic as the lyric, dealing with the hate of hate, the scorn of scorn, the love of love, of the world within. And, though the epic subsumes under itself the lyrical impulse or element, in the way we have noted, yet the lyrical in poetry at times has the epical for its subject. But it takes from the epical just so much as

it wants while keeping true to itself as lyrical poetry, with the emotions peculiar thereto. The psychic form, indeed, of the vital unit in all poetic creation is just poetic mood, which has no simpler embodiment than the lyrical. Whereas the epic must have, for its subject, one great complex action, the single rapturous thrill, out of which no long poem could be made, is the inspiration of the lyric. But this brevity of the lyric is valuable, because it keeps the poet's art, in its expression of feeling, within rational and wholesome bounds. At least, it should do so, although the emotionalism of Romanticism, which partook more of lyric than epic character, was not always quite healthy in nature. For the lyric is poetry in its simplest, purest, most subjective, and personal—but yet ideal—form. The lyric is therefore the most perfect vehicle for the expression of spiritual life, from the way in which it precipitates the essence of the ideal. The pure lyric, in its native simplicity and flowery brightness, is a thing so beautiful and rare that the world is always willing to stand in hushed delight before it.

As examples of its acutely personal note may be taken Heine's "Wenn ich in deine Augen seh'," Burns' "Ae fond kiss and then we sever," Tennyson's "Tears, idle tears, I know not what they mean," Wordsworth's "I wander'd lonely as a cloud," and Shelley's "Stanzas written in dejection, near Naples." Single, whole, unmingled, must be the leading mood or rapture of

lyric poetry. To this ruling sentiment, thought, or emotion, everything else must be subordinate and accessory. Hence we have the uniquely felicitous in Horace, the successfully human in Béranger, the incomparable in Burns—than whom none among modern poets has more nearly attained the pure lyric—and the inimitable in Heine, in their power to clothe the dominating sentiment or emotion. For the lyric is primarily a cry of the heart—which could never be content with any mere *ens rationis*—an impulsive and exuberant outburst of emotion. This inevitableness of the lyric is its supreme quality. Its crystalline purity, and its ideality of abstraction, enable it fitly to reflect what is most final in our nature. In pursuance of this end it must preserve the simplicity natural to itself, as lyric, and suffer no flamboyancy or excessive ornament. Think of the horror of introducing such elements into a matchless lyric like Tennyson's—

“Break, break, break,
On thy cold gray stones, O sea.”

Say that the freshness of the early world has gone from our modern lyrics, and we shall repeat that the artificialities, if not insincerities, of ancient lyricism have also departed. But it is time to flee *Weltschmerz*—our desolating world-sadness.

The lyric poet, remaining ever himself, freely abandons himself to his own vivid impressions, but

the epic poet may not wrap himself up in personal interest in this fashion, but must have his readers ever before him. In the primacy of the song spirit, the lyric differs from the epic, whose motive and inspiration are primitively ethical. The ethnic hero of the epic is, in some sort, an ideal individual, embodying in himself whatever is best in his race. This forthsetting of the greatness of man made the greatness of Homer's poetry. The epic poet has no concern to interpret history, even heroic history, but to fill his poem with dramatic passion and strength of mind. For the epic does not, of necessity, concern itself with great historic events or issues, or demand a magnificent and ideal subject. Only the artificial epic—that of a Virgil, a Tasso, a Milton—makes such demand. What truly differentiates the epic is its comprehensiveness and dramatic variety. But it remains, of course, distinguished from other forms of composition by its solidity, stateliness, nobility, solemnity, and even frigidity. Hence the phantasmal sway exerted by the epic on so many of the great poetic minds. Chaucer—the saviour, with Boccaccio, of mediæval romance—did happily not allow himself to succumb to this tendency, even as did Boccaccio. Even in so early an epic type as the “*Chanson de Roland*,” those epic qualities of dignity, directness, force, simplicity, universality, are already present. It is because of the world, in its more mature stages, having outgrown epic conditions, that only two great

epic poems have been given to our more modern world—namely, the cosmical epics of Dante and Milton, with their amazing fire.

The lyric, early sublime in Æschylus, after Archilochus, and raised to new prominence at the beginning of the Romantic era, has certainly lost nothing of its significance in our own times. For it now expresses a judgment of the worth and zest of life, no less than a desire for keen and vital spiritual being. Prophetic as Shelley's "West Wind," the lyric is aspiring as his "Skylark." Its goal is an ethereal flight, through ever-deepening empyreans. The lyric impulse rises in fire—in fire which slowly burns in a Wordsworth, more fiercely in a Byron, and becomes a rushing flame in a Shelley. Marked by expectant poise, it ends in breathless suspense, or becomes—as in Victor Hugo, whose name, Swinburne extravagantly said, is above every name in lyric song—a song of the sunrise, a thing of glorious sound and colour. But the lyric often, as in the case of Shelley, voices moods or states of feeling in a way which defies analysis, and obscures—and means to obscure—thought that would become clear, and emotion that would be defined. The thought is overlaid by the splendour and superabundance of the imagery. The lyric is then in a world of its own, where thought has no end to seek, and emotion is chased by emotion in swift, piled-up succession. In all this it partakes of the subtle and universal idealism of the poetic attitude. For the

lyric poet is happily just he whom we sometimes see pass splendidly out of the personal into the universal.

No poet has surpassed Moore in the felicity of his sacred lyrics, word and sound being wedded together in the most perfect fashion. He reminds one of what the Italian poet and novelist D'Annunzio has said, that in lyric poetry the essential element is not the word, but the music—not the word as letter, but the word as sound and rhythm. This lyric success, both as to metre and language, is conspicuously present in the sacred lyrics of D'Annunzio's countryman, Manzoni. This importance of the melody of rhyme for modern lyrical verse—so different from the formal metrical dispositions of Greek and Latin poetry—Milton quite failed to appreciate. The poetic idealism, of which we have spoken, is finely exemplified in the ideal future pictured for Greece, with rare hope and enthusiasm of lyric genius, in Shelley's "Hellas." The epic, which had the honour to have its essential properties described so long ago as Aristotle and his "Poetics," has had its relations to other forms of poetry much better explicated.

It was not Aristotle—to whom Homer was the only poet who knew "the right proportions of epic narrative"—but Plato, who voiced the sentiment that all good poetry, "epic as well as lyric," is the result of inspiration, not of art. There is but one Iliad, and it is the most perfect epic the world has seen,

with nobility, grandeur, high-spiritedness all its own. But the world recognises how much it has to be thankful for in Virgil's *Æneid*, in the "*Divina Commedia*" of Dante, the "*Nibelungen Lied*," Tasso's "*Gerusalemme Liberata*," Spenser's "*Faerie Queene*," Milton's "*Paradise Lost*," yea, and in many other national products as well—the Spanish "*Poema del Cid*," and the "*Lusiad*" of Camoëns are samples—that were epic in spirit and character. The great German epic, the "*Nibelungen Lied*," has been the subject of interesting discussion as to historical basis and mythical elements. The simple, plain, easy, natural, direct style of a Homer is widely different, in the sentiment and feeling it carries, from that of Virgil in a literary epic like the *Æneid*,—a difference greatly due to the ages in which their works were created. And the war of Troy, it has been truly said, "is not the subject of the *Iliad* in the same way as the siege of Jerusalem is the subject of Tasso's poem." In epic poetry we witness the triumph of art in the elimination of rhyme. True epic inspiration will always show itself in concentrated fire and sonorous dignity befitting its theme. This is where the Latin epic poem of Petrarch, entitled "*Africa*," came short, being so often tame, despite its popularity and acclaim in the poet's own time. The true epic demands at least religious imagination, for, in its desire to explain its great humanitarian fact or event by heavenlier agency or power, it shows itself to be, of all poetic

styles, the most essentially religious. Precisely because it is the proper function of the epic poet to find the providential clue to the maze of events, Virgil in the *Æneid* rightly represents *Æneas* as the passive instrument of Divine direction.

In this respect we must rate Dante more highly than Milton, for Dante's cosmical epic is more shot through with Christian idea, and is more penetrated by the Christian conception of the universe, than is Milton's great epic. Hence it is scarcely exaggeration for Huber to say that "there is no single poem in the whole range of human compositions which for importance of subject, elevation of thought, earnestness of conviction, or corresponding perfection of execution, can bear comparison with Dante's great epic." So fixed is Dante's eye on the spiritual side of creation, that the temporal and transitory of his age is seen reflected in the light of the universal and eternal: the mirror is for all time. In this sense Dante's epic ranks higher even than the *Iliad*—model for all time as Homer's epic must be—for the true poet of humanity is much more he who deals with man within the whole redemptive sphere and reach, than he whose world is peopled with purely human gods, with crude ideas of heaven and earth, and the ceaseless combats of Hellenic heroes. Hence we find so accomplished a scholar as the late A. J. Butler able to say that "there is no one work of human genius which can equal it as an instrument

of education, intellectual and moral." The whole growth of the epic—its slow evolution from old and common forms of poetry—is in the direction of the freedom of the imagination. Epic dignity, stateliness, and magnificence are the result of such freedom of the dramatic imagination. Such epic stateliness is found even in English verse so old as "Beowulf," which is not without its passages of striking Homeric likeness. In our great English epic, Milton has lost epic dignity and perfection by his recourse to episodes connected, no doubt, with the main course of action, but not essential, nor helpful, to it; such are, for example, his narrations about Raphael and Michael. Homer had the skill to avoid such formal episodic passages, winning thus higher artistic perfection for the *Iliad* than can be claimed for the *Æneid*, or even for the "*Gerusalemme Liberata*," since, in both of these, scope is found for some more formal use of the episode. Tasso, however, is much less partial to its use than Virgil.

Milton, less ethereal or spiritual in his Divine descriptions than Dante, yet deals with a theme that lacks in human interest, as lying too much outside the range of human experience. Yet the fact is not without significance of its own, that both Milton and Dante locate their epics in no events or emotions of their own time—nor, indeed, in the provincialism of this petty planet at all—but in worlds ideal, supernal and infernal. The most engaging of Milton's

characters is just Satan himself, who is formed, less after the fashion of biblical representation, than after Greek conception of Prometheus. Such is he of whom our poet says—

“Yet not for those,
Nor what the potent Victor in His rage
Can else inflict, do I repent, or change,—
Though changed in outward lustre,—that fixed mind,
And high disdain from sense of injured merit,
That with the Mightiest raised me to contend,
And to the fierce contention brought along
Innumerable force of spirits armed,
That durst dislike His reign ; and, me preferring,
His utmost power with adverse power opposed
In dubious battle on the plains of Heaven,
And shook His throne. What though the field be lost ?
All is not lost ; the unconquerable will,
And study of revenge, immortal hate,
And courage never to submit or yield,
And what is else not to be overcome,—
That glory never shall His wrath, or might,
Extort from me.”

(*Par. Lost*, i. 94-111.)

Our poet, with his grand style and vague quality, later resumes the strain—

“Farewell, happy fields,
Where joy for ever dwells ! Hail, horrors ! hail,
Infernal world ! and thou, profoundest hell,
Receive thy new possessor ! one who brings
A mind not to be changed by place or time.
The mind is its own place, and in itself
Can make a Heaven of Hell, a Hell of Heaven.
What matter where, if I be still the same,
And what I should be,—all but less than He

Whom thunder hath made greater? Here at least
 We shall be free ; the Almighty hath not built
 Here for His envy ; will not drive us hence :
 Here we may reign secure ; and in my choice
 To reign is worth ambition, though in Hell ;
 Better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven."

(*Par. Lost*, i. 249-263.)

Milton's "keen, translunar music" continues—

"He, above the rest
 In shape and gesture proudly eminent,
 Stood like a tower : his form had not yet lost
 All her original brightness, nor appeared
 Less than archangel ruined, and the excess
 Of glory obscured : as when the sun, new-risen,
 Looks through the horizontal misty air
 Shorn of his beams ; or, from behind the moon,
 In dim eclipse, disastrous twilight sheds
 On half the nations, and with fear of change
 Perplexes monarchs ; darkened so, yet shone
 Above them all the archangel." (*Par. Lost*, i. 589-600.)

The Miltonic love of the vague and boundless is no infrequent spring of beauty in the style of "Paradise Regained."

For all that has been already said of the freedom, naturalness, and spontaneity of the lyric, it must not be thought that the lyrical impulse knows no law, or that the emotion involved therein knows no development of logical and orderly character. The primacy of the poetic impulse does not keep the poet's emotion from being harnessed to intellectual clearness and logical order, even though emotion remains always

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lord and master. There is no finer example of this than Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind," of which we give the beginning—

"O wild West Wind, thou breath of Autumn's being,
Thou, from whose unseen presence the leaves dead
Are driven, like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing,

Yellow, and black, and pale, and hectic red,
Pestilence-stricken multitudes: O thou
Who chariotest to their dark wintry bed

The winged seeds, where they lie cold and low,
Each like a corpse within its grave, until
Thine azure sister of the Spring shall blow

Her clarion o'er the dreaming earth, and fill
(Driving sweet buds like flocks to feed in air)
With living hues and odours plain and hill:

Wild Spirit, which art moving everywhere;
Destroyer and Preserver: hear, oh, hear!"

Shelley is as ethereal and intangible in his poetry as in his life.

Again, in Shelley's "Skylark," where the lyricism is so perfect, there is advance from note of joy to notes of wistful questioning, of anxious aspiration, of sadness born of self-knowledge and the disillusionments of life; advance also to the vision of the ideal in its distant but undimmed lustre and peerless worth. Hence, for example, the outburst at close of the poem, which, however, is in places rather melancholic for a skylark—

“Teach us, sprite or bird,
What sweet thoughts are thine :
I have never heard
Praise of love or wine
That panted forth a flood of rapture so divine.

Chorus Hymenæal,
Or triumphal chaunt,
Matched with thine would be all
But an empty vaunt,
A thing wherein we feel there is some hidden want.

What objects are the fountains
Of thy happy strain ?
What fields, or waves, or mountains ?
What shapes of sky or plain ?
What love of thine own kind ? what ignorance of pain ?

With thy clear keen joyance
Languor cannot be :
Shadow of annoyance
Never came near thee :
Thou lovest ; but ne’er knew love’s sad satiety.

Waking or asleep,
Thou of death must deem
Things more true and deep
Than we mortals dream,
Or how could thy notes flow in such a crystal stream ?

We look before and after,
And pine for what is not :
Our sincerest laughter
With some pain is fraught ;
Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought.

Yet if we could scorn
 Hate, and pride, and fear ;
 If we were things born
 Not to shed a tear,
 I know not how thy joy we ever should come near.

Better than all measures
 Of delightful sound,
 Better than all treasures
 That in books are found
 Thy skill to poet were, thou scorner of the ground !

Teach me half the gladness
 That my brain must know,
 Such harmonious madness
 From my lips would flow,
 The world should listen then, as I am listening now."

The lyrical contempt of method, which we thus see to be more apparent than real, is in contrast with the epic, which, though not without its own unity of sentiment, allows no diffused impersonal sentiment to interfere with the dramatic strength and variety of its characters. The simplicity of the lyric—the prevalence of the single mood—is possible in epic poetry also—witness the "Chanson de Roland"—but it is more rare and difficult in the epic, and is apt to mean there simply loss of dramatic subtlety or force or charm. When the epic does succeed in maintaining simplicity and avoiding appearance of method, we see its success attained by summoning to its aid large infusions of lyrical tone and sentiment, and by use of deeper methodological con-

siderations than at first sight appears. That the lyric products of poets like Burns, Moore, Byron, and Swinburne should not have more frequently been of the sonnet form or order is surprising, even allowing for the poetic restraint of said form. Simplicity in the epic, indeed, instead of being the merit we have seen it to be in the lyric, tends to sink the epic to the level of the ballad, with its less ambitious, less self-conscious, less aristocratic character. Not only does the lyric exist less by method than the epic, but, in its inception, the lyric exists less for its moral force than for its music. Not so the epic, which, though music is not unimportant to it, comes into being for the sake of moral point and motive. But even the lyric is not without underlying idea—truth coloured by mood and personality. The personality, of which the lyric is the efflorescence, is an ideal self—a thing of ideal values. Says, therefore, Rabbi Ben Ezra—

“What I aspired to be,
And was not, comforts me.”

And again—

“All I could never be,
All, men ignored in me,
This, I was worth to God, whose wheel the pitcher
shaped.”

But in the great reflective developments of the epic, there is present a quality of abstract concep-

tion, which embodies fuller mood and conveys a larger message, like that we have seen in Milton's Satan shadowing forth the arch-impotence of the energetic working of evil in the human heart. It is precisely the lack of such larger conception that marks the defect of such an epical composition as Boileau's "Lutrin"—first suggested, undoubtedly, by Tassoni's great and original poem—whose satire of the upper middle classes of France lacks the large satiric character of poets like our own Dryden or the French Regnier. So much must be said, despite Boileau's own claim for his verse that it always said something—"mon vers, bien ou mal, dit toujours quelque chose." At the other end of the scale is the sacred epic of the German Klopstock, in which the straining after greatness of conception and treatment, together with other artistic faults, produced unhappy results. If we must still weep and lament that the masters of epic are no more with us, we can at least rejoice that our age has produced lyrical genius so astonishing as that of Swinburne—the Byron, and more than the Byron, of his generation. But, even as to epic conditions being wanting, it may be well to recall how wanting is our generation in the pains and trouble to study great epics, even were they produced. Nor, indeed, should we overlook the not inconsiderable epical success actually realised in "Sigurd the Volsung" by William Morris in our time. But of the lyric triumphs of the day, time

would fail to tell, and they at least attest the presence and the vitality of the poetic instinct among us. Take, for example, this lyric from Swinburne's "Atalanta in Calydon"—

“For against all men from of old
Thou hast set thine hand as a curse,
And cast out gods from their places.
These things are spoken of thee.

Strong kings and goodly with gold
Thou hast found out arrows to pierce,
And made their kingdoms and races
As dust and surf of the sea.

All these, overburdened with woes
And with length of their days waxen weak,
Thou slewest ; and sentest moreover
Upon Tyro an evil thing,

Rent hair and a fetter and blows
Making bloody the flower of the cheek,
Though she lay by a god as a lover,
Though fair, and the seed of a king.

For of old, being full of thy fire,
She endured not longer to wear
On her bosom a saffron vest,
On her shoulder an ashwood quiver,

Being mixed and made one through desire
With Enipeus, and all her hair
Made moist with his mouth, and her breast
Filled full of the foam of the river.”

But, as Professor Mackail, of Oxford, has properly pointed out, Swinburne made the fateful mistake of

trying to extend his lyric muse over the whole field of poetry—a thing impossible and absurd. This is not to detract, however, from the peerless worth of the lyric range and power of him who was laureate of the ocean, and whose stanzas sweep along like the billows of the sea. Nor is it to overlook that lyric poetry, as that of Pindar—greatest of the Greek lyrists—may yet minister to the vitality of the epic tradition. Of “Atalanta” one may certainly allow, with Lowell, that “the lyrical parts are lyrical in the highest sense,” without failing to feel the thinness of the thought and the superabundance of the imagery, as marring the poem, despite its fine sense of form and proportion. Not to a Swinburne, but rather to an Ariosto, should one go for the lyrical in a real epic, full of freshness and spirit, and of a rare inventiveness. This, of course, is not to say that Ariosto’s thought does not lack in depth, or that his characters are never wanting in individuality. The marvellous thing about Swinburne’s high lyrical power is still its co-existence with his rare intellectual detachment from those emotions which are characteristic of ordinary humanity.

CHAPTER V.

THE POETRY OF PETRARCH.

PETRARCH'S place is in the front rank of poets. We are not unmindful of his place as Humanist in so dwelling on his position as Poet. His ideal, formed by study of the classics, was one of perfection, alike of art and taste. His amazing versatility was, happily, matched by his untiring industry. A many-sided nature was his, with a large sense of freedom and an uncommon breadth of vision. Perfect as writer and man of letters, he stands, as poet, distinguished by the warmth, ease, grace, delicacy, sincerity, charm, elevation, exquisiteness, of his poetry. Garnett has well said that he was "the first modern literary dictator, the first author to receive the unanimous homage of the world of culture, and may be said to be both the cause and effect of this world of culture." On the joint invitation of Rome and Paris, Petrarch had a public coronation in the former city. Though greatest poet of his age, Petrarch did not escape the relentless

hostility of enemies. His genius opposed itself, as Albert the Great, Aquinas, and Raymond Lully had done, to Averroës and his philosophic teachings, which found high favour at that time in Italy, particularly in Venice. For the doctrine of "Monopsychism," in Averroism, was a leaven that wrought virulent strife, then and later, in the Scholastic philosophies. Dante had given Averroës mention because of his historical importance as a commentator on Aristotle. The implacable hostility or ridiculous animosity on this score was, owing to other sorrows and misfortunes of the time, keenly felt by Petrarch.

Without the depth and power of Dante, Petrarch on occasion excels Dante in taste. Bound not to the past as was Dante, Petrarch's poetry is often instinct with the belief in progress, and lit with the fire of hope in and for the future. Different as their work might thus be, the men themselves are alike in their thirst for fame. Dante never doubts his own greatness, and his glory disturbs not his peace. Not so Petrarch, in whom the glory frets his soul, and limits his less universal range of power. The father of Italian lyrical poetry, he developed the capabilities of the sonnet as had never before been done. And by his *Canzoni* his fame lives, having survived severe and rude historical shocks. His poetry, so rich in simple natural beauties, imparted a stability and melodiousness to

the Italian tongue which it has not lost with the centuries. What in these respects the mighty courage and creative genius of Dante had incipiently done for the Italian language, Petrarch carried to noble completion. Besides which, it is hardly possible to speak too highly of the service rendered by his powerful and famous personality, as promoter of the study of ancient literature and restorer of polite letters. Ardent classicist as he was, he did not encourage vernacular literature to the same degree as Dante; Petrarch and Boccaccio were, in fact, precursors of the *Rinascimento*, during which period (1375-1494) the vernacular was cast aside for all higher literary purposes. Cherishing a vain and, one must say, foolish hope of immortality from his Latin works—which, though greatly superior in power to those of Boccaccio, were severely enough criticised by the fastidious Erasmus and others—he was destined to win glory from his Italian poetry, of which he himself thought but little. The “*Rime del Petrarca*” were to acclaim him prince of lyric poetry; and not until so far down the generations as Leopardi was Italian literature to meet greater, or even equal, simplicity, directness, and naturalness. Tasso is distinctly inferior in lyrical power, despite his great potentialities, alike to Petrarch and Leopardi, at their best. The lyrical aspirations of Chiabrera, fed on the freedom and boldness of Pindar, come in result not near the achievements

of Petrarch. Petrarch lacks, no doubt, in graphic power and sharp qualities, all being by him presented under a rich metaphorical haze. Hence the forced and artificial character of his writing in places, marking occasional fall from his usual magnificence and inspiration. His conceits (*concetti*) also, and abstract personifications, are distinctly fatiguing. Even in admired sayings, like that of his—

“Pallida no, ma più che neve bianca,”

in reference to his dead Laura, there is at times just a suspicion of self-conscious art, occupied with its own cadences as well as the object. There is too much precision for real passion. Unsurpassed he remains in tenderness and fiery strength, in melodious flow and rich delicacy of style. His originality lies in his freedom from subserviency to all models; where love had been treated as mere symbol or idea, Petrarch made it living and passionate reality. Laura, his type of ideal womanhood, has had both her existence and her identity called in question, but it is not quite easy to bring oneself to think she is a mere poetical creation, even if it be most difficult, or even impossible, for us clearly to define her personality. His love for Laura—an entirely hopeless passion—absorbed him for wellnigh fifty years, and was at once the glory and the torment of his existence. This concentrated love of his life is set forth with brilliancy,

constancy, loftiness, and charm of the most unwonted character. The spiritual personality of Laura turned the poet's thoughts heavenward, for she had from the earliest been of religious disposition, and religious spirit and tendency were in her supreme to the last. Petrarch, on his part, is full of enthusiasm and sensibility, vexed with distractions, careful and troubled about many things, never too happy—in fact, with a much less sanguine temperament and less fortunate temper than his friend Boccaccio. It is this restless spirit which is so striking a feature of Petrarch as to explain why he was shorn of much of the nobility that else had marked him, for it was an insatiable and tormenting thirst for glory. Mighty was the influence exerted by these two, Petrarch and Boccaccio, on the course of European poetry, determining, in fact, its course for a couple of centuries at least in all the main languages of Europe. Petrarch's poetry is often considered, justly enough, as a triumph of form and poetic style—of pure literary art, but Petrarch did not himself consciously realise this ideal: poetry is to him, in plainest terms, simply allegory, and that, too, in the painful mediæval sense. His metrical forms, borrowed from his predecessors, were perfected by him, and used with greater ease, but he is by no means free from mannerisms of his own. Unwearied he was in the revising and arranging of his poems. On his *Canzoniere* his fame chiefly

rests. These are lyrics of various forms, and they are often divided into four parts, not without some diversity of view and arrangement.

Many of the sonnets in the first part are superb; concerned they are with the grace and beauty of Laura. But the Canzoni are even more famous and remarkable, having earned the unstinted praise of Petrarch's severest critics, Tassoni for example. It must not be thought that the host of pieces, making up this first part, are devoid of unity of emotional feeling and purpose, for deeper study shows that such was not the case. They form a serial story of his life, and of his love for Laura—a love which was the lineal descendant of the Provençal love. It may be here remarked that our poet's celebration of the eyes of Laura constitutes poetry of very noble and elevated character, and has always been much admired in Italy itself. Of those eyes it is said by the poet that they were tender and brilliant—

“Gli occhi sereni, e le stellanti ciglia.”

Charles Bagot Cayley, rendering in very free fashion, says of them—

“There never have been seen such glorious eyes,
 Either in our age or in eldest years ;
 And they consume me as the sun does snow ;
 Wherefore Love leads my tears, like streams ashore,
 Under the foot of that obdurate laurel,
 Which boughs of adamant hath and golden hair.”

From the Canzone beginning with the words, "Chiare, fresche, e dolci acque," I give a rendering of my own, the Canzone being famed for its grace and delicacy, and its untranslatable character.

I.

Clear waters, cool and sweet,
Where her fair limbs laved she,
Whom alone I lady call ;
Dear bough, where leaned, so meet—
With sighs I still her see—
'Gainst thy fair flank her all :
Plants, flow'rs, the graceful pall
That shrouded her fair form
With her angelic breast ;
Air so serenely blest,
Where Love my heart did storm ;
Give audience all in one,
For grief hath me undone.

II.

My destiny may be—
And Heav'n grant that it may—
That love-strain close my eyes ;
My poor frame—let it be
Among you kept as clay,
The freed soul home shall rise.
Death will have fewer sighs,
If I this hope may bear
Unto that pass of doubt :
Nor could the soul tired out
To haven more quiet repair ;
None to more tranquil grave
Worn flesh and bones e'er gave.

III.

The time will come perchance
 When to the wonted place
 Will turn she, mild not mad :
 And there, where first her glance
 My day made one of grace,
 May look both fond and glad
 In seeking me—oh, sad !—
 Now dust beneath the stone ;
 Love may in her inspire
 Such sighings of desire
 As may for me atone,
 May over Heav'n prevail,
 As dries her eyes her veil.

IV.

Fair branches did let rain—
 Sweet is the mem'ry still—
 Of blossoms fill the lap
 Of her who sat through all
 Meek in such glory's thrill,
 Hid in the am'rous hap.
 Flowers some her hem did cap,
 Some fell on tresses fair,
 Yea, pearls and golden sheen
 Were that day to be seen ;
 Earth, stream, each got its share ;
 Some, whirling in career,
 Seem'd say—"Love reigneth here."

V.

How many times I said—
 Then full of awe—"Sure, she
 Was born in Paradise !"
 Forgetfulness so laid
 Her mien divine on me,

Face, words, smile, in such wise
Held me as to disguise
For me true forms of things ;
Said I, deep sighing, then,—
“How came I here, and when?”
As if to Heav’n on wings.
Thenceforth so blest that spot
That elsewhere peace is not.

Such was the fountain of Vacluse to Petrarch, in whose lovely retreat, near Avignon, he had buried himself. What grace and precision some of the original lines contain; that, for example, which runs—

“Pose colei che sola a me par donna.”

Voltaire, in giving a French version of this Canzone, remarked that such monuments of the human mind relax our too prolonged attention to the misfortunes that have troubled the earth. But Voltaire made some very incorrect remarks on this beautiful Ode to the fountain of Vacluse, not perceiving the really rich, regular, and rhymed character of its verse. Many of the sonnets, in the first part, are anniversary poems, and, as such, very charming. Sonnets and Canzoni alike are made, with unwearying devotion, declare the coldness and disdain, and the incredible beauty — *incredibile bellezza* — of his Lady. Thoughts of her alone bring to him peace, his wounds at length healed by her graciousness. The romantic, exalted, and sorrowful love-quest of

the poet, in this first part, is not quite easily followed by every one, but makes demand upon experience.

In the second part of the *Canzoniere* we find a deep tinge of melancholy, for Laura is gone, to be followed by Petrarch through years of mourning. The whole part is one great apotheosis of Laura, but it bears within itself the effects of the poet's moral conversion. It is a much more closely connected whole than the first part. Laura in heaven is almost more real for us than she was on earth, and she "reigns" from heaven over Petrarch, and gives him "strength." His mournful strains are more readily apprehended by many than the peculiarly romantic character of the experiences that preceded them, for "Who hath not lost a friend?" "Blessed are the eyes that saw her alive," says Petrarch—

"Beati gli occhi che la vider viva."

But that blessedness does not keep him from representing himself as visiting her in heaven, whence she promises that eventually he shall meet her there, if his desire do not wander (*se 'l desir non erra*). The Canzoni of the second part are; without exception, beautiful, notably that beginning, "Che debb' io far?" ("What shall I do?") In the course of it occur the striking lines, which have been somewhat freely (not by me) rendered thus—

“ Ah me ! that lovely face, prey to the worm !
Which made earth heaven,
Pledge of immortal hue.
Unseen in Paradise now is her form ;
The veil is riven
Which o’er her youthful prime its shadow threw,
Yet to be worn anew,
Radiant and glorified,
And never laid aside,
But everlasting, and mortals descry
That with Eternity Time cannot vie.”

Of this second part of our poet’s work a small portion was translated by Spenser in 1591, under the title, “The Visions of Petrarch.”¹ Great renown was brought Petrarch by his beautiful Ode to Giacomo Colonna, Bishop of Lombez, tidings of whose death reached Petrarch at the same time as the news of the death of Laura. The ode is that beginning—

“O aspettata in ciel, beata e bella anima.”

But the second part may be said, in whole, to be occupied with the poet’s desolateness in the absence of his Lady—a desolateness only to be lightened as she revisits him, bringing to him consolation, courage, heavenly strength and inspiration. A rare and noble spiritual crescendo is the poetic result.

Pass we now to the third part, consisting of the six *Trionfi*—or Triumphs—of Petrarch. These rep-

¹ Spenser, Aldine Edition of the British Poets, vol. 5.

resent, in a species of allegory, the various phases of human existence; self-love, self-denial, death, fame rescuing man's memory from death, time which, our poet says, "with destroying venom blasts great names," and Eternity, which finally absorbs all. These six Triumphs—Love, Purity, Death, Fame, Time, Eternity—really form one poem, since one clear intention dominates them all. They constitute an idealisation of his own history. They form a poem really subjective, though capable of universal application. They are steeped in classicism, while remaining great as poetry. The most powerful treatment is in the third—the Triumph of Death (*Trionfo della Morte*)—which, after the way of Dante and Tasso, recalls Laura, and makes her yield the most fitting consolation. This she does in lines to which the following rendering has been (by another) given:—

" 'I am alive, and thou as yet art dead,
And such thou wilt remain,' she answe'ring said,
' Until at length the solemn hour is struck
In which thou too shalt pass from off this earth.
Brief is our space of time, alas ! not suited
To the extent and length of our discourse ;
Therefore, be wise, restrain thy speech, and cease
Ere the day dawn which is so close at hand.'

' We reach at length the end of this estate
Which we call life,' I trembling said ; ' and then,
I do beseech thee tell me, since by proof
Thou knowest it, is there in very truth
Such fearful sharpness in the pangs of death ?'

‘ While yet thou followest the vulgar herd,’
She then replied, ‘ seeking with all thy might
Its partial favour ever blind and hard,
In vain thou mayest hope for joy or peace.
Death only opens wide the prison gate
To faithful souls, setting them free. To those
Whose hopes and wishes grovel in this clay
Nor rise above it, it is bitter pain.
And now my death, which doth thy soul so grieve,
Would fill thee with all gladness, couldst thou know
E’en but the thousandth part of my great joy.’ ”

But the Triumph of Fame over Death yields to the Triumph of Time.

The fourth part consists of sonnets and compositions on various themes, and need not now be dwelt upon. In according such high place, as we have done, to the poetry of Petrarch, it is but just to remember to what great precursors he stood spiritual heir, in such pioneers of early Italian poetry as Rinaldo and Jacopo of Aquino, Cino da Pistoia, Guido di Guinizzello da Bologna, &c. We have said nothing of the Latin verse of Petrarch, which, though much superior to that of Boccaccio, brought no great satisfaction in its results, except, of course, the fame of his ponderous poem on “Africa.” Besides the poet’s passion for Laura, two other passions were powerful in him—love of country and love of knowledge. As to the former, patriot he was in the larger sense of the term, perceiving the madness of Italian states or cities that spent their strength in rending each other in pieces, whether Florence, or Venice, or Genoa.

With wisdom and generosity greater than may be claimed for Dante or for Alfieri, he sought, in vain endeavours, to bring some unity and dignity to his nation, which had neither political unity nor community of aim in respect of national life. Rome and her history formed one of our poet's favourite enthusiasms. His love of country led him into a disinterested but blind and passionate devotion to the fiery Rienzi, even when the latter was carried away into a betrayal of his principles and those absurd follies that culminated in his miserable failure and downfall. These and other political environments had their influence on Petrarch's poetry, as such a Canzone as the immortal "Spirto gentil" testifies. The nobility of a Dante, however, would never have required such an expostulation as that of Boccaccio with Petrarch on his residence at Milan with the Visconti. As to the second—Petrarch's love of knowledge—his own imperfection in Greek was very great, but the merit belongs to him, with Boccaccio, of re-awakening in men's minds a sense of the splendour of Greek poetry. This was no small humanistic merit, if, with the late F. W. H. Myers, in his classical essays, we hold that—

"There never has been, there never will be, a language like the dead Greek. For Greek had all the merits of other tongues without their accompanying defects. It had the monumental weight and brevity of the Latin

without its rigid unmanageability; the copiousness and flexibility of the German without its heavy commonness and guttural superfluity; the pellucidity of the French without its jejuneness; the force and reality of the English without its structureless comminution. But it was an instrument beyond the control of any but its creators."

The truth is, that Petrarch, in his pursuit, like Goethe, of a complete self-culture, took the classics to be unique for that aim. Great as is the poetry of Petrarch, and great as was the glory of the poet who had been solemnly crowned on the Capitol in 1341, we cannot place the poet of Vacluse on the same pedestal as Dante. Where Petrarch, man of the world, draws inspiration from Greece and Rome, Dante, the solitary, draws it more directly from Nature, soul, and God. For Dante's is the more universal genius, while Petrarch is too often bounded by the local, the picturesque, and the historic. Even in the Dantean vision of Beatrice, Beauty was but the veil of that Divinity, whose worship Love was. The thought of Dante is clearly defined, while the views of Petrarch are marked by fluidity. What frigidity is found in Petrarch is due to the way in which the spirit of classicism is allowed to work in him. More true and striking is he when swayed by the spirit of mediævalism, and yet his was far from being a mediæval mind. Apostle he, in fact, was of the dawning Renaissance, harbinger of Humanism and the new learning, with originality and in-

dividuality all his own. He, in the end, could say that all he cared for was to learn—

“Altro diletto che ’mparar, non provo.”

Hence his love of seclusion — *solitaria vita* — as a means of escape from perverse people who had, as he says, missed the way to heaven. Hence we find Andrew Lang saying in ‘Homer and the Epic,’ that “the Renaissance woke to the enjoyment of Homer, Petrarch dying with a copy of the book which he could not read in his hands.” Petrarch himself predicted, in his poem on “Africa,” that the new-born love of the Muses, in this *imitatio veterum*, would be such as to rival the old. Petrarch’s influence on many of our own poets is undoubted: its traces are clearly discernible in Chaucer, in Wyatt and Surrey, in Spenser, in Shakespeare, in William Drummond of Hawthornden, in Milton, in D. G. Rossetti, and others. But Petrarch’s influence on the language and literature of Italy was incalculably great: in words, in phrases, in form, and in tone, he gave fixity to the Italian tongue. The ingenuity—the infinite art—of his sonnets is amazing. But his odes, or Canzoni, are still more wonderful, in the complication of their rhymes, the richness of their fancy, the boldness of their imagination, the thrilling nature of their beauty, and the occasional sublimity of their power. With resistless force the poetry of Petrarch dispelled the lingering feeling in Italy that only

the language of Virgil and Horace could be fit vehicle of poetry. But from his study of the antique, he learned—as none in Italy had done—a true love of, and real delight in, Nature, and manifested a strong native affinity with the classical Latin authors. For the present, then, our main concern has been with the fact that the language of Italy, which, under the creative genius of Dante, had been formed and welded into a thing of power, was polished and perfected by Petrarch into a thing of beauty for ever.

CHAPTER VI.

ITALIAN POETRY OF OUR TIME.

SOMETHING is done to make contemporary poets in Germany and France known to the English-speaking world: why should the poetical literature of Italy to-day be so often treated as a negligible quantity? One has but to mention such names as Carducci, Chiarini, D'Annunzio, Fogazzaro, Graf, Mazzoni, Negri, and Pascoli,—to name no others,—to see the injustice of such a procedure. Genius has hardly ever been without a home in Italy, and has certainly a residence in the poetic spirit there to-day. The day of Monti, with verse of boundless flow, is long past; long silent is the muse of the great Alfieri and the daring Foscolo; spent long ago the mighty Greek-like genius of Leopardi, wasted on lyrics of lamentation and despair; hushed, also, the noble, modest, and gifted Manzoni; gone are the bright and hopeful Aleardi, Tommaseo, and many another beside.

For the Italy of the nineteenth century had not only a brilliant array of philosophers, historians, and

novelists, but, passing from "the great massy strength of abstraction," had a rich supply of poets also, memorable for their power and originality in dealing with the objectively real. Certain it is that Italian poetry does not in our time lack in originality and even grandeur; its capital defect is, not to be sufficiently focussed and centred in mighty poems and great personalities. That poetry has followed the instinct of genius, doing "what it must," but at times caring overmuch for perfection of form and finish. Besides the interest that resides in its own genius, there is the worth it carries as the heir of that comprehensive Italian Humanism to which Europe owes so much.

I have headed this chapter "Italian Poets of our Time," because I do not wish to be restricted to poets of to-day. At the head of Italian poets of our time stood Carducci, than whom Europe has perhaps had no more powerful poetic genius in our generation. The so-called "pagan" or "barbaric" movement headed by Carducci, was something inevitable—the result of life overleaping the bounds of old and outworn paths. A vital thing was the new literary Revival or *Risorgimento*, and more than four decades have passed since Carducci voiced its spirit of revolt in his classic "Hymn to Satan" (1865), with its lack of finish but its famous apostrophe—

"Salute, O Satana,
O ribellione,
O forza vindice
Della ragione!"

That is to say, "Hail to thee, O Satan! O rebellion! O avenging force of reason!" The Satan so invoked is no spirit of evil, but simply the unquenchable spirit of progress. Thus he says—

"To thee, of all being,
Principle immense,
Matter and spirit,
Reason and sense."

It was the revolt of the Neo-Classical School against the churchly Christianity then current and the obscurantism of the priesthood. Strength, vigour, dignity, resonance, and classic beauty are the marks of Carducci's verse. Not only are strength and beauty within this poet's sanctuary, but the beauty is as modern as it is antique. He drank no less deeply of the spirit of Heine and Hugo than of that of Horace. His paganism is, after all, merely of the latter-day type—as, indeed, it could only be. Among his later attractions were Shelley and Byron. But Carducci can never be popular. He wrestled with the deep problems of life; he found for them large and eloquent utterance; he cared for more than impeccable form. He brought a creative spirit, close thought, and high ideals to bear upon his poetic work. It was he who said—

"Or destruggiam. Dei secoli
Lo strato è sul pensiero :
O pochi e forti, all' opera,
Chè nei profondi è il vero."

Which we may thus render—

“Destroy we must. Of the ages
The highway by Thought is made :
O ye few and strong, to the work,
For Truth in the deeps is laid.”

It is, of course, possible to hold that Carducci was too cultivated and too clever, and that his originality as a poet suffered from over-study of great models. But he has not lost hold on life, nor has he followed Latin models in slavish manner.

The “cold bath of erudition” which Carducci was to give the literature of his time was no lifeless thing, but a broadening of spirit, a widening of horizon, and a perfecting of form, in midst of life that should be altogether real. Carducci is, in fact, the great exponent of the Hellenic reaction in Italy, wherein Hellenic objectivity is seen reasserting itself. To him the Divinities of Greece knew no setting. His example recalls that of Goethe, who, in his ‘Hermann und Dorothea,’ is at once more Greek than usual and more German than ever. The Hellenic spirit of Carducci finally vents itself in passages like that beginning “Addio, Semitico Nume,” in the poem “In Una Chiesa Gotica,” which runs thus in Sewall’s fine version—

“Farewell, Semitic God ; the mistress Death
May still continue in thy solemn rites,
O far-off King of spirits, whose dim shrines
Shut out the sun.

Crucified Martyr ! Man thou crucifiest :
 The very air thou darkenest with thy gloom.
 Outside, the heavens shine, the fields are laughing
 And flash with love.

The eyes of Lydia—O Lydia ! I would see thee
 Among the chorus of white shining virgins
 That dance around the altar of Apollo
 In the rosy twilight.

Gleaming as Parian marble among the laurels,
 Flinging the sweet anemones from thy hand,
 Joy from thine eyes, and from thy lips the song
 Of a Bacchante !”

Carducci voices the same Hellenic spirit and strong individuality in passages of the earlier ‘*Levia Gravia*’ (1868), that just given being taken from the more important ‘*Odi Barbare*.’ Everywhere his beauties are severely classical, untouched with the “divine folly” of the Romantic spirit. Much more unfortunate is his lack of the spirit of Christianity, beauty finding, for him, highest expression in the forms of ancient Greek thought. But the same sort of attitude has appeared in our own Swinburne. Carducci’s poetry is not, however, without aspects which show that Christianity did not wholly remain without appeal to him. Its ascetic aspects chiefly evoked his dislike. Carducci’s learning was not only great, but growing to the end : his assimilative power, in respect of the largest and most varied materials, was certainly remarkable. His language is of the purest ; his style is vigorous ; his treatment devoid of excess, whether of thought or feeling ; but his Italian is sufficiently

allusive and thought-laden to make no easy reading. His predilections for history made him view the past as that which we can alone see in true and just proportions ; hence his utterance in the ode on Shelley's tomb—

“Sol nel passato è il bello, sol ne la morte è il vero.”

The merit will always be his of having sought to restore form to its just place in Italian poetry, even if his ‘Odi Barbare’ should be destined to remain without serious imitation.

Of patriotic spirit there is no lack in Carducci : even his hatred of Romanticism sprang from it : Italy and her freedom—that freedom “whose open eyes desire the truth”—form his all-consuming love. His ideal for Italy lay not in the sway of the House of Savoy, though unity and greatness lay that way alone. But, influenced by Mazzini, and enthusiastic over Garibaldi, Carducci longed for no monarchical rule, but for restoration of the Roman Republic. Eventually he avowed his loyalty to King Humbert, and became a senator. For all his love of Italy, Carducci could on occasion be severe enough on her defections, as in his poem “Feasting and Forgetting,” where—in Maud Holland’s version—we find him saying—

“Alas ! left alone of the sworn of a noontide,
My muse, O Caprera—thy bare rocks doth see ;
And, lone and disdainful, of Roman debasement,
Deserted Mentana—asks pardon of thee.”

Full of poetic power and tragic element is the poem "Piedmont," among the 'Rime e Ritmi' (1889), or poems of diverse metres, but it does not stand alone in patriotic fire and glow. Among the finest pieces of the 'Odi Barbare' must be reckoned "To the Statue of Victory," "In the Square of San Petronio," "Ruit Hora," "By the Sources of Clitumnus," "On Monte Mario," "Snowfall," and "Lines on Rome." From this last piece I give four stanzas (the rendering my own)—

"Thee after the force of those mighty ages
 April illumines, sublime thy presages,
 Italy greets thee, the sun thee engages,
 Flower of our nation, O Rome.

.

Into thy Forum's deeply-drawn solitude
 Sound may not come, nor glory may intrude,
 Thine, all that world owns as civic, not crude,
 Still great and august, O Rome.

Hail, Rome divine! who knows not thy spirit
 Knows wintry cold—its frigid demerit,
 From his dull heart springs nought to inherit
 Save forest of barbarous thorn.

Hail, Rome divine! low-bowed to those remnants
 Of the great Forum, tears are the pendants
 Dropped o'er those traces by thy descendants,
 Country, and goddess, and mother."

But, as in other great Italian poets, all renderings must be inadequate. In the 'Rime Nuove,' are some very beautiful sonnets, to "Virgil," to "Night," to

"The Ox," &c. Also, the charming poems on homely things, "Before San Guido" and the "Idyll of the Maremma," are found here. His likings are, in this respect, like those of Virgil long before. He drew peace and strength from these country contemplations.

It will be well to glance at Carducci's relation to the sonnet. His lyrical genius had put new dash and vigour into the Italian sonnet—always so much more rich in buoyant tunefulness than sonnets in English. What Carducci thinks of the sonnet may be seen in this powerful rendering by Dr Garnett—

"Brief strain with much in little rife ; whose tone,
 As worlds untrodden rose upon his thought,
 Dante touched lightly ; that Petrarca sought,
 Flower among flowers by gliding waters grown ;
 That from trump epical of Tasso blown
 Pealed through his prison ; that wert gravely fraught
 With voice austere by him who marble fought
 To free the spirit he divined in stone :—

To Æschylus new-born by Avon's shore
 Thou camest harbinger of Art, to be
 A hidden cell for hidden sorrow's store ;
 On thee smiled Milton and Camoëns ; thee,
 His rout of lines unleashing with a roar,
 Bavius blasphemes ; the dearer thence to me."

Or, again, Carducci's mind as to the sonnet may be gathered from these lines (the rendering is my own)—

“Dante the sonnet raised to heights divine
 Diffusing it through azure air and gold ;
 Petrarch a murmuring stream whose waters shine
 Made of the numbers that the heart's grief told.

Mantuan nectar and the Venusine,
 By favour won from Tibur's muse of old,
 Torquato brought ; his dart adamantine
 'Gainst slaves and tyrants flung Alfieri bold.

Like nightingale did Ugo sing his lays
 Beneath Ionian cypress and the bloom
 Of fair acanthus fed by kindly rays.

And I, the last, both joy and sorrow bring,
 With perfume, wrath, and art, as thro' my days
 Its power I call, and to the tombs do sing.”

Among other things, it should be noted how difficult a form of poetry is the sonnet by its essential nature. Even in the earlier sonnets of Carducci, the poet has not attained full power, but is still under the melodious influence of Petrarch. The Italian sonnet is peculiarly difficult to English-speaking people, because it is so different, both in form and spirit, from our notions of poetry. The Italian sonnet has, for wellnigh six centuries, been the recognised form of poetry for any sort of disconnected utterance, whether idea, conceit, witticism, analogy, simile, or graceful saying. The sonnet has, indeed, from Dante downwards, become incorporated with the very being of Italian poetry. Each sonnet has its single theme : each word its own right place.

In Italian sonnets the thought is dominant: we have to regard its intellectual character rather than seek some lyrical form. And it does not come quite easily and naturally for us to do so. Much, however, as we may make of the sonnet, as the invention of the Italian muse, it must yield to the Canzone in variety of rhythmical character, and in capability of fine effect. There is no finer Carduccian, among Italian poets of our time, than Professor Guido Mazzoni, with elegance, power, and vigour all his own. Let this rendering of "Night" by Mr Greene suffice as a specimen:—

"Now Night spreads out her starry veil anew
To comfort all the fields with heat consumed;
O'er dusky hills around, now re-illumed,
Rises heaven's glittering dome of deepest blue.

Perpetual harmony sounds deep and low
As of a wedding song, where through the sky
The silent stars take their refulgent way;
And through the heart of man the current slow
Of ancient memory runs, as with a sigh
He calls to mind his youth's departed day.
Wherefore such deep complaint? Shall anger sway
This fragile form so swiftly withering?
Life bringeth forth in everlasting spring
Upon the eternal stem flowers ever new."

D'Annunzio has sung with brilliant power in his Swinburnian verse, though he moves not so much in the realm of the ideal as Carducci, nor quite attains his matchless strength. D'Annunzio is a

figure of very great literary interest, with splendid potentiality of achievement, despite his affectations and his lack of altruism. Greene's rendering of the following sonnet must serve as example of D'Annunzio's power, his "impetuous torrent of melody":—

"Beneath the white full-moon the murmuring seas
Send songs of love across the pine-tree glade ;
The moonlight fluttering through the dome-topped trees
Fills with weird life the vast and secret shade ;
A fresh salt perfume on the Illyrian breeze
From seaweeds on the rocks is hither swayed,
While my sad heart, worn out and ill at ease,
A wild poetic longing doth invade.

But now more joyous still the love songs flow
O'er waves of silver sea ; from pine to pine
A sweet name echoes in the winds that blow,

And hovering through yon spaces diamantine,
A phantom fair with silent flight and slow
Smiles on me from its great-orbed eyes divine."

His form is faultless: his poems pulsate with life and energy. Indeed, the creations of D'Annunzio have been acknowledged to be æsthetically magnificent, and it is to be hoped that the poet may not lack the binding power or concentration of qualities for achievements still, beyond all he has yet realised. For the poet in him has been overshadowed by the novelist.

Fogazzaro is famed for his nature studies, in which natural beauties are faithfully mirrored by his refined

muse. A fine spiritualistic idealism marks the poetry of Fogazzaro, typical of all that is finest in the Italian nature. The nobility of faith, the dignity of suffering, the beauty of simplicity, and the power of love,—in these his genius rests. Very fine are the pieces styled "Evening" and "Miranda," while that on "In St Mark's at Venice" shows how he cleaves to faith in the ideal. The poetry of Pascoli has a sweet, Wordsworthian flavour: he celebrates the beauties, the nature charms, and the peasant life of the Apennine country; he feels the haunting mystery of death; but, amid all that is local and personal, he retains some sense of cosmical values, however inadequate. Graf has a muse of sombre cast, his original power being deeply tinged with northern sadness. His poetical work entitled 'Medusa' has taken well, spite of its sad visions of "the fall of worlds in ruined space," "Death a crownèd queen," "the perished Faith," and "the God that is no more!" The muse of Ada Negri is strenuous and of great poetic promise; her wondrous force and fire have been generally admitted, but have waned in her latest work. Rapisardi, Guerrini, and Stecchetti are among the other poets of Italy to-day; though by no means wanting in power, they lack in depth and calmness. The realism of Stecchetti, Carducci cordially detested.

Enough has been said of Italian poetry of our time to show how that poetry has been shaking off the

trammels of conventionalism. When the standard of classical revolt shall need be no longer lifted against Romanticism, Italian originality and power will be found more free from the disharmony and lack of serenity and balance, that have so often obtained since the days of Leopardi, with thought as bitter as his style was sweet. Italy has not yet, it is true, given birth to poet so striking as Burns in dialect, or so strong as Shakespeare in tragedy. This latter statement is made without any lack of appreciation for what was done for Italian tragedy by Alfieri, Monti, Niccolini, and Manzoni. The depth of Italian influence on our own poetry has been strikingly evidenced in the Brownings, and in Swinburne's 'Songs Before Sunrise.'

But the poetic advances of Italy have been so great that there is no saying what yet may be. The land of Dante and Ariosto is a land of great potentialities, and lacks not life and vivid thought, any more than perfect style. When the violence of literary insurrection shall have passed, Italian genius will break forth in new forms of development. There will be recovery of tranquillity of mind or intellectual complacency, which must add power to the originality, freshness, and versatility that already exist. And among these developments one can think of none for which there is more abundant scope than for Italian poetry to become more deeply infused with Christian spirit. We are not so enamoured of their

“paganism” as not to think the poets of that land would, so far from losing, most surely gain in power, were they more suffused with the spirit of religious faith that breathes in the work of a Dante, a Tasso, or even the noble-minded Manzoni, by whom no line was written which, dying, he could wish to blot.

CHAPTER VII.

THE GENIUS OF BROWNING.

SINCE John Milton, no subtler, manlier, more original poet has arisen within this realm than Robert Browning. Tennyson focussed in himself many poetic influences, new and old; Browning was no such centre. Absolutely unique he stands, without a peer in individuality, subtlety, originality, suggestiveness. At root and base of his character lies religion. As true poet, he is something both of philosopher and theologian. God is one of the things that "stand sure" for the mystical side of his genius, and the divineness of the universe is another—the "universe that feels and knows" in his "Epilogue." His is a ceaselessly active spirit: his thought is restlessly inquiring. True, it may not have been given him to voice the hopes of the Victorian era as did Tennyson, but has he not done more? No synthetic tendencies of his, it has been said, ever bore him beyond a certain aversion to leaden uniformities, orderly continuities, harmonious evolutions, all dear

to Tennyson. And yet, it must be remembered, with what rare poetic power, philosophical precision, and fulness of thought Browning set forth the conception of evolution in "Paracelsus" and in "Prince Hohenstiel-Schwangau." It is, indeed, in the scientific principle or idea of evolution that his whole ethical scheme has its groundwork. The synthetic endeavours of thought were, however, sometimes baffled by his mighty sense of individuality, in its lofty, idealising efforts. Pre-eminently Browning has been the poet of the soul, one with whom it was a prime article of faith that—

"Earth changes, but thy soul and God stand sure."

Hence he moves in the regions of motive, of character, and of conduct, drawing, in his unravellings, from the stores of all the centuries. Antique figures he liberates from their surroundings, and, by realistic portrayal, powerful analysis, and deep insight, sets them in real and intimate relation with modern life. Into his characters he puts not a little of his own intense and isolating self-consciousness. For him the world held nothing that might compare with the soul of a man. 'Tis he who has been able to find—

"In man's self arise
August anticipations, symbols, types
Of a dim splendour ever on before
In that eternal circle run by life."

Such infinity he postulates for the soul in its ideal

strivings. Even God is made to appear at times as though He existed, in our poet's thought, rather for the sake of man than for Himself. At any rate, the thrilling drama of the soul, through all cycles and changes of life, is set before us by Browning with power all his own. But he feels the impossibility of successfully extorting the secrets of the soul, as under lock and key. To him there is no doom for the soul, here or hereafter, like that of being "shut out of the heaven of spirit." Chief in his thought is the single soul, "the subtle thing that's spirit," with its wondrous developments. For spirit is, indeed, his ultimate, and his interest in the soul so dominates him that nature and all else are subordinate.

The individuality of the soul, in its central independence, he maintains, in "Ferishtah" and elsewhere, in such wise that the soul is man's "plot" to be cultivated, with whatsoever Divine helps or tendings, but always and everywhere as his own responsible undertaking. Finely does he preserve the human personality inviolate, so that not even Deity may overpass its barriers. There is, indeed, no more positive aspect of the working of Browning's genius. Hence it is said, in "Christmas Eve" for example, of this relative separateness of the human personality from God—

"God, Whose pleasure brought
Man into being, stands away

As it were a hand-breadth off, to give
Room for the newly-made to live
And look at Him from a place apart
And use His gifts of brain and heart."

The trouble is, that Browning carried this centralising of the soul upon itself—as an "inmost centre" in us all, where, as in "Paracelsus," "truth abides in fulness,"—to a point where it reacted to the disadvantage of knowledge. The baffling and perverting flesh might, no doubt, be the source of all error, but, here and elsewhere, knowledge became narrowed by Browning to a most sterile and unsatisfactory issue. Here also, in the sufficiency of the individual and his love, we have obtruded the lack of social consciousness in his psychology. But yet his thought has become so enlarged as, in its cosmopolitan range, to embrace mankind for its elect, with the world for their school of training. What a priceless gift, in our age of doubt, was so whole-souled a poet as Browning—one whose cheering optimism and buoyant faith gave expression to the confidence that—

"God's in His heaven,
All's right with the world."

His genius early showed itself in this confident vision of God. God is so near and real to him that—

"He glows above
With scarce an intervention, presses close
And palpitatingly, His soul o'er ours."

Thus, among the meshes of the finite, he discerns the Infinite. Directly was God known to him as the Universal Power—proof he needed none. Look at the universe, he thinks, and you will feel yourself in the presence of this God of Power.

“From the first, Power was, I knew”—

he says; his sense of Power played mighty part in shaping his poetic world; human souls were the centre of that Power's play; his sense of Power traverses the whole range of human experience, rude and refined, slow or cataclysmic, with a decided preference for the latter. Gradual evolutions were often to Browning nothing as compared with sudden upheavals, swift transformations, mighty transmutations, stupendous catastrophes. Even his delight in angular, abrupt, and intricate poetic form was part of his instinctive genius. But Browning's Theism rises higher than this conception of Power. It ascends to the intuition of God as a God of love. His theistic faith is really an intuition rather than a philosophy, even though its soul-truths be illustrated from experience and supported by arguments. Browning's God is not such a pervasive spirit of the universe that He is lost in pantheistic imaginings, as of a Goethe or even a Wordsworth; for Browning's sense of individual personality was so strong as to make that impossible. It is, in fact, for him the primal reality that God is Love. So real was the vision of God's love to him,

as the highest solution of all the mystery around us, that, under the overpowering disclosure of it in Christ, he could say—

“The whole God within His eyes
Embraced me.”

Yes, for to Browning God, “the All - Great,” had, in becoming man, become “the All-Loving” too. So was it even possible for our poet to say—

“I say the acknowledgment of God in Christ,
Accepted by thy reason, solves for thee
All questions in the earth and out of it.”

’Twas thus he saw the finite taken up into the Divine or Infinite nature. The Carlyle of poetry he has been called, and, no doubt, his individuality wore a rugged strength. But he, as did not Carlyle, always glorified love beyond power. Love is always, with him, a strenuous thing, perfected only amid suffering and struggle. He thinks

“There is no good of life but love.”

But love has, in Browning, amazing intensity and range; and he unsparingly employs the “glaring pomps” of bold and intense colour in its variegated service, as part of his realistic method and tendency. He sees that life

“Is just our chance o’ the prize of learning love.”

The absolute worth of love he never ceases to proclaim. Never poet glorified love as he: in this

respect he is continuator of Dante and of Shelley. "All's Love" with him, yet "all's Law," the law having been made by Love. Love, rather than knowledge, is the key-word of his teaching. For "love is victory, the prize itself." In "Sordello," indeed, it is just love that enables the soul to solve the problem of fitting "to the finite" its "infinity," and meeting the needs or claims of Time and of Eternity at one and the same time. This, with reminder that—

"To be complete for, satisfy the whole
Series of spheres—Eternity, his soul
Needs must exceed, prove incomplete for, each
Single sphere—Time."

For Browning's own vast, vital energies all had their ideal centre in Love. But such love was never to him the enemy of intellect, but rather the quickener of the new births of mind. Enigmatical as much of Browning's poetry may appear, there is yet no mistaking his spirit or his power. The spirit of strenuous, everlasting endeavour—endeavour and aspiration that turn failure into ultimate achievement, and overcome the sordid by the spiritual,—that is the spirit of Browning. The power of an endless love—a love learned in God and full of the unlimited possibilities that are found in Him,—that is Browning's power. It is to Love his genius turns and says—

"God is: thou art—the rest is hurled
To nothingness."

For though, as we have seen, he early felt the glories of power, he could later say, as in "Asolando"—

"Life has made clear to me
That, strive but for closer view,
Love were as plain to see."

His optimism is, in its deepest aspects, grounded in the self-sufficingness of love, but the poet who exclaims in "Saul," "How good is man's life, the mere living!" is one who is optimist without waiting for deeper grounding, because of the pleasure he has in life simply as life. The principle that happiness eludes him who makes it his pursuit is not always clearly grasped by Browning; he sometimes gropes. The love of God is, to Browning, of that personal sort which, implying a central Loving Will, makes Providence possible to man's life, which "an Arm ran across"; which finds room for man to catch "at God's skirts" in prayer; and which opens the door of blissful intercommunion wherein the soul finds that, of all pomps and splendours, spiritual "Love is best." In "Christmas Eve and Easter Day" we have bold and, for Browning, unexampled apparitions of the Lord of Love, proving that "the soul's depths boil in earnest" in these poems. In "Christmas Eve" we have a vision of Christianity as an historic reality. Browning is freely critical, though his genius is never more Christian than here. He holds to Christianity as teaching universal love—a love embodied in a

Divine Man, type and pattern for all time. And this love runs into immortality, for the poet says—

“I shall behold Thee, face to face,
O God, and in Thy light retrace
How in all I loved here, still wast Thou!”

He goes to Dissenting Chapel, leaves it impatient and unsympathetic, but on reflection comes to see that preacher and people had, after all, *love* for their possession—the one thing needful and called out by the Vision of Christ. So, too, when he passes to St Peter's in Rome, he finds—despite “Rome's gross yoke”—the vital thing called love present, in some sort, there also. But “intellect” cannot there be fed. The relations of “love” and “knowledge” are all-important, for every rational being both knows and loves. But here—as in “Paracelsus”—the real thing to Browning is *what* to know and *what* to love. For, though to Browning “love” is all-important, yet to him “knowledge” is found in life—the life of “love” and strenuous quest. To him Christ is here—

“He who trod,
Very Man and Very God,
This earth in weakness, shame, and pain.”

For to the Divinity of Christ the poet held, while not lacking sympathy for those who could not. When next the Göttingen professor bids his audience “venerate the myth” of Christ, which he has emptied

of meaning, Browning is hard upon him and his "loveless learning." He reflects that

"the Truth in God's breast
Lies trace for trace upon ours impressed :
Though He is so bright and we so dim,
We are made in His image to witness Him."

For Browning the end of life is to learn love—to learn to know God—and that largely through human fellowship. God is for him the *end* to which man tends. But Browning is too apt, for all that, to make man, and man's soul, the substantive, and God the adjective, which can certainly not be anything like an ultimate view. Here and elsewhere 'tis a main point of Browning that real touch with God is got through our human loves, for in them the knowledge of God grows alive within us. It is in such love that, to Browning, God grows comprehensible to us.

The same glorification of Love marks the "Easter Day" poem, where all that is not signalised by love is unsparingly condemned—

"All thou dost enumerate
Of power and beauty in the world,
The mightiness of Love was curl'd
Inextricably round about."

Indeed, his blended psychological and mystical powers make every "incident of soul" familiar to Browning's genius, which has unlimited experience and command of Love. The darker or more tragic

aspects, as when answering love is gone, are not strange to him, as is seen in "James Lee's Wife"—

" Ah, Love, but a day,
And the world has changed !
The sun's away,
And the bird estranged ;
The wind has dropped,
And the sky's deranged :
Summer has stopped."

But the sorrows of love—its tragic, unspoken griefs—are not things that hold Browning's genius in deepest thrall; his moods are too mobile, and his intellect too strong and resourceful, for that. In the intellectual sphere, it is the problematical that allures Browning; in the ethical sphere, it is the incomplete that carries him away as with a flood; but always and everywhere, Love is that which absorbs him, for it is in love that he finds highest expression for spiritual vitality. Therefore do we find him, in "Saul," asking—

" Do I find love so full in my nature, God's ultimate gift,
That I doubt His own love can compete with it ?"

The only trouble, with Browning, in all this, is, that passion is in places made so much the expression of personality, and the fulfilment of life, that his ethical emphasis grows too eudæmonistic, and dangerous in tendency, if taken seriously. Tennyson is

greatly his superior in this respect, and is much more worthy of emulation than Shelley, whom Browning approximates. To Browning, the Divine comes to man through spiritual struggle—the power of love and severe self-sacrifice—rather than through Nature as vehicle, as it came to Wordsworth. The joy of conflict, the glory of struggle, the life of vigorous, full-blooded action,—these are characteristics of the ideal consecrated by the genius of Browning. More technique as a poet he might well have had, but scarcely more elemental genius. For it is out of his amazing vitality, rather than from any speculative principles or systematic deductions, that the pregnancy of his thought springs. Not without suffering is love to him made perfect. By suffering comes growth. He can say, in “The Ring and the Book”—

“ Was the trial sore ?
Temptation sharp ? Thank God a second time !
Why comes temptation, but for man to meet
And master, and make crouch beneath his foot,
And so be pedestalled in triumph.”

The hindrances and difficulties are to Browning but necessary factors in the evolving of the good, as 'tis said in the philosophy of life of the non-Hebraic “ Rabbi Ben Ezra ”—“ nor soul helps flesh more, now, than flesh helps soul ” ! For him life “ means intensely and means good.” But his philosophy of life is no

indolent optimism, no aimless passivity: the poet of "The Statue and the Bust" has, in his characteristic insistence on growth, the message that—

"a man contend to the uttermost
For his life's prize, be it what it will."

And again—

"The sin I impute to each frustrate ghost
Is the unlit lamp and the ungirt loin."

Browning's optimism is grounded in no mere idealism, for none has more deeply sounded the real fulness of man's heritage in life, and none has more nobly shot it through with elements of spiritual fire. It is idle to pretend, however, that the fire in Browning is always spiritual, for, in the poem just mentioned—and elsewhere—there is a glorification of the fire of passion which is neither admirable nor happy. Here he says that, for the purpose of a test, a "crime" will do as well as a "virtue golden through and through," which I call bad ethics and false psychology. Full acceptance he has made of life, with its charges and its mysteries; and, in its warfare with sense, it was to the feeling-power of Love, rather than to any rational idealism, that he trusted for power and triumph. How widely contrastive is the abounding life he proclaims with the calm, self-poised resignation and endeavour of Arnold! The pensive regret of Arnold has given place, in Browning, to triumphant hope, and the melancholy isolation of the former to love and

service. Life is to him one unbroken whole, but a whole that is capable of vast and boundless growth. Good unreached, and even unconceived, is what he sets before us. All growth, all spiritual development, means for him a closer union with God. Life in the whole, life in its fulness, has been grasped by none more fully than by Browning. Yet his lofty Theism brings him painful sense of man's imperfection as set over against the perfection of God. Hence in "Saul"—

"Perfection no more and no less,
In the kind I imagined, full-fronts me, and God is seen God
In the star, in the stone, in the flesh, in the soul and the clod."

Yet, "what's come to perfection perishes," and "what's whole," in any absolute sense, is imperfect, since it "can increase no more," as 'tis said in "Dîs Aliter Visum." Says our poet in "The Ring and the Book"—

"Life is probation, and this earth no goal
But starting-point of man."

And the comfort, the sustaining power, amid our failures, is said in "Rabbi Ben Ezra" to be—

"All I could never be,
All, men ignored in me,
This, I was worth to God, whose wheel the pitcher shaped."

The spiritual life is to Browning the very essence of living—and not a thing apart. It is life in Time, for rarely does our poet rise to real sense of the illusori-

ness or unreality of Time, whose shadow indeed he projects into Eternity. Such life, however, as no mere episode, but an eternal and timeless essence, he does at times proclaim. In his strong grip on Time he rightly feels the moment to be the thing of supreme significance. Hence in "Abt Vogler"—

"All we have willed or hoped or dreamed of good, shall exist ;
Not in its semblance, but itself ; no beauty, nor good, nor
power
Whose voice has gone forth, but each survives for the
melodist
When Eternity affirms the conception of an hour."

Browning's varying or uncertain hold of the illusive-ness of time, or on reality as timeless, is not surprising; for, though Kant, Hegel, and Schopenhauer may have definitely held to it, it is by no means a generally accepted doctrine so far. This is true alike of philosophers and of theologians, not to speak of poets, to whom, however, the notion might more easily come in their mystical or ecstatic moods. Nothing is to Browning more characteristic of man than the capacity for well-ordered, evenly-balanced moral growth. Hence he is so severely impatient of any lack of decision in character, that he fails of adequate appreciation of character decisions, as determined solely by their moral significance, in which duty and virtue are everything, passion and pleasure nothing. "His soul's wings never furled," man is to him "set to instruct himself by his past self." For life is to him

not merely probation, but education as well: he intends "to get to God," and he esteems the rays of present knowledge because of the way they "sting with hunger for full light." For he believes—

"Man partly is, and wholly hopes to be."

The poet would have us take heart before the tragic sorrows and failures of life. Indeed, none has spoken more powerfully or comfortingly in this connection than he. We feel the contrast of "the petty Done with the Undone vast," and in our felt and acknowledged failure the poet finds the promise of a future attainment. In our life's preparation, unfruitful though it be, he finds the sign of a great spiritual continuity of life. In the fact of our capacity for something spiritually higher or better, he finds a pledge that some wider, fuller scope will yet be found for it. Says Browning—

"Earn the means first—God will surely contrive
Use for our earning."

For he grows not weary of voicing the value of unsatisfied aspiration. No pain is without its use in his eyes ("The Ring and the Book")—

"All pain must be to work some good in the end."

Elsewhere he says (in "Sordello")—

"for mankind springs
Salvation by each hindrance interposed."

Of the growth, which is the indefinitely large outcome,
he speaks as

“Progress, man’s distinctive mark alone.”

The poet of “Pauline” says—

“Soul resteth not, and mine must still advance.”

If man’s work were faultless and perfect, it would not be well, he thinks ; for there ought to be in man a sense of illimitable progress in Art. Hence—

“a man’s reach should exceed his grasp,
Or what’s a heaven for?”

says “Andrea del Sarto.” Thus does he project progress, as final good, into heaven itself. The onward course of man he describes, in “A Death in the Desert,” in this wise—

“Man knows partly but conceives beside,
Creeps ever on from fancies to the fact,
And in this striving, this converting air
Into a solid, he may grasp and use,
Finds progress.”

What life may bring to us that is false, Browning would have us take and master ; but he does better when he teaches to accept truth as truth, and be content with nothing but the truth. For, in “Master Hugues of Saxe-Gotha,” we are told that—

“Truth’s golden o’er us although we refuse it.”

While, in “Fra Lippo Lippi,” wherein the universality

of Art is finely vindicated as answering to the fulness of life, we are bidden—

“count it crime
To let a Truth slip.”

In “Mr Sludge, the Medium,” we are told that—

“One truth leads right to the world’s end.”

Also, that we shall find

“every lie
Quick with a germ of truth.”

Man’s desire and true attitude are clear—

“Day by day, while shimmering grows shine,
And the faint circlet prophesies the orb,
He sees so much as, just evolving these,
The stateliness, the wisdom, and the strength,
To due completion, will suffice this life,
And lead him at his grandest to the grave.”

It might be, as we are told in “Fifine,” that “truth” was “forced” to manifest itself through “falsehood,” but the human soul would find its way through the “shows” of sense, which, ever proving false, still promise to be true, up to union at last with God. So was it that the quest of truth, of truth which is life, became for him a passion—the “rage”

“Of knowing, seeing, feeling the absolute truth of things
For truth’s sake, whole and sole.”

Yet again, he tells us we must draw to ourselves

“Truth’s very heart of truth.”

'Tis part of his philosophy that

"We must endure the false, no particle of which
Do we acquaint us with, but up we mount a pitch
Above it, find our head reach truth, while hands explore
The false below."

In this way, then, to use words of "Master Hugues of Saxe-Gotha," his

"fugue broadens and thickens,
Greatens and deepens and lengthens,"

with a courage and a loyalty that never fail of cleaving unto the truth. Hence, in "Pictor Ignotus," he has pictured the artist's need of courage and loyalty to his own loftiest aspirations, unheeding of the criticism of the crowd,—the need to flee a timid and monotonous discharge of his high trust with one "cold, calm, beautiful regard." "Ever a fighter" was Browning, and the conflict of ideas roused his energies, and woke in him the heavenly spark. Of none were Browning's lines more true than of himself when, on his death-bed, he wrote, putting all his life into the words, of

"One who never turned his back but marched breast forward,
Never doubted clouds would break,
Never dreamed, though right were worsted, wrong would triumph,
Held we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better,
Sleep to wake."

If from this in "Asolando" we turn to "Prospice," we find this passionate outburst in full view of death—

"For sudden the worst turns the best to the brave,
 The black minute's at end,
 And the elements' rage, the fiend-voices that rave,
 Shall dwindle, shall blend,
 Shall change, shall become first a peace out of pain,
 Then a light, then thy breast,
 O thou soul of my soul ! I shall clasp thee again,
 And with God be the rest ! "

How finely Browning sings, in "Saul," the eternity of love in God, when he speaks of

"a Man like to me,
 Thou shalt love and be loved by, for ever."

While there is always a purifying of that which is good, there is, for Browning, utter destruction for a judgment upon all that is evil. Hence, in "Abt Vogler," 'tis plainly said—

"There shall never be one lost good ! What was, shall live
 as before ;
 The evil is null, is nought, is silence implying sound ;
 What was good, shall be good, with, for evil, so much good
 more ;
 On the earth, the broken arcs ; in the heaven, a perfect
 round."

Yes, "Man has for ever," and the poet holds that Heaven's light will break for us at last, as 'tis said in "The Inn Album"—

"there is
 Heaven, since there is Heaven's simulation—earth."

The fascination of faith Browning so keenly felt that it has been charged against him that he ended by leaning

on faith rather than on reason, and on faith when above and even against reason. But, at any rate, we can learn from Browning without doing so. For there is always an element of reason in faith, and an element of faith in true reason, and the two are in fullest harmony and accord. Faith is, in the last resort, but reason sublimed. Nothing is more rational than such faith. Such faith is but the last step of reason. Nothing better can Browning do for us than enable us to share, amid our trials, falls, and aspirations, such faith as that which, in "Abt Vogler," turns to a Father-God, and exclaims—

"Therefore to whom turn I but to Thee, the ineffable Name?
 Builder and Maker, Thou, of houses not made with hands!
 What, have fear of change from Thee Who art ever the
 same?
 Doubt that Thy power can fill the heart that Thy power
 expands?"

For then we can say with Browning, "Faith is my waking life," and further, "Since we love, we know enough."

The genius of Browning is seen in the range, variety, and accuracy of his work, with its marvellous portrait-gallery of character. Not only is he poet, but also philosopher, metaphysician, psychologist, and ethicist. His philosophy is of the subjective idealist type, with transcendentalisms not always free from crudeness; in "Ferishtah" and elsewhere his philosophisings about religious matters give free play to the tran-

scendental imagination. It would be doing him injustice, however, to present him as a philosopher, in the strict and technical sense: in the influence of his creative literary genius, he is more than a philosopher. But the individuality of the poet's dominant and splendid intellect is seen in the power of his constructive imagination, in the workings of his essentially creative nature. His genius shines through all his rare progressive intellectual vitality, with its originality, subtlety, strength, and spiritual nobility. We have dwelt upon his genius rather than his faults: his faults—never far to seek—are those of the giant, trampling upon rhythm, upon grammar, and upon artistic judgment; the circle, through which his ideas pass before us, is indeed small, but the range of his subjects is of the widest, and every fault may well be forgiven his extraordinary genius, with its unexampled strenuousness, its great intuitional hold, its keen analytic power, its exuberant life, and its overflowing expression.

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